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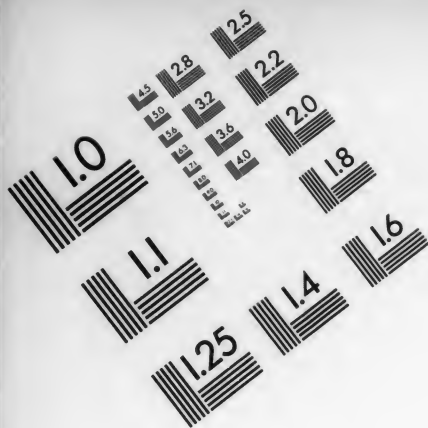
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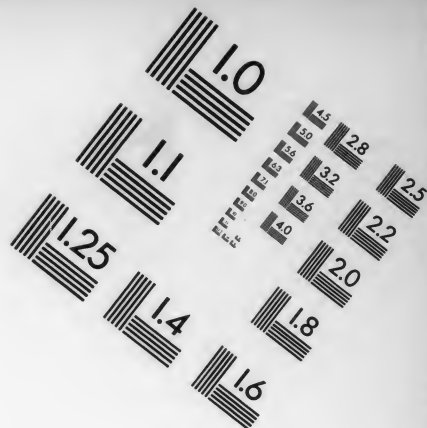


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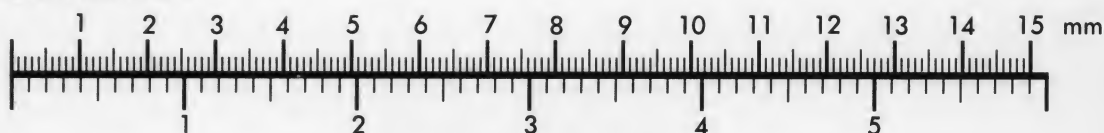
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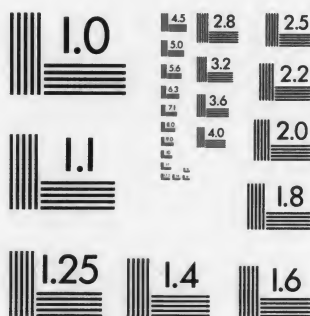
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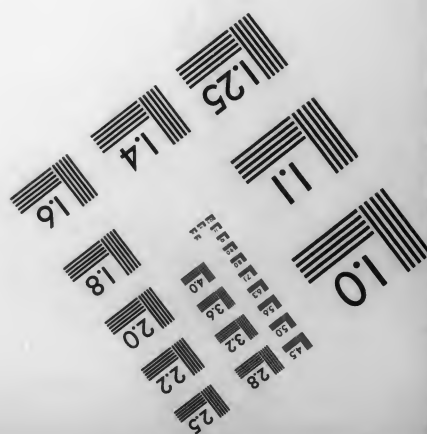
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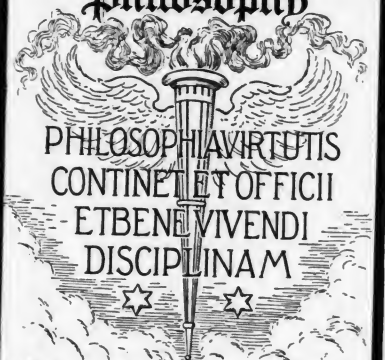


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The Ethical Library

SOCIAL RIGHTS AND DUTIES

ADDRESSES TO ETHICAL
SOCIETIES

BY

LESLIE STEPHEN

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.



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NOTE.

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L. S.

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THE AIMS OF ETHICAL SOCIETIES.*

I AM about to say a few words upon the aims of this society: and I should be sorry either to exaggerate or to depreciate our legitimate pretensions. It would be altogether impossible to speak too strongly of the importance of the great questions in which our membership of the society shows us to be interested. It would, I fear, be easy enough to make an over-estimate of the part which we can expect to play in their solution. I hold indeed, or I should not be here, that we may be of some service at any rate to each other. I think that anything which stimulates an active interest in the vital problems of the day deserves the support of all thinking men; and I propose to consider briefly some of the principles by which we should be guided in doing whatever we can to promote such an interest.

We are told often enough that we are living in a period of important intellectual and social revolutions.

* Address to West London Ethical Society, 4th December, 1892.

In one way we are perhaps inclined even to state the fact a little too strongly. We suffer at times from the common illusion that the problems of to-day are entirely new: we fancy that nobody ever thought of them before, and that when we have solved them, nobody will ever need to look for another solution. To ardent reformers in all ages it seems as if the millennium must begin with their triumph, and that their triumph will be established by a single victory. And while some of us are thus sanguine, there are many who see in the struggles of to-day the approach of a deluge which is to sweep away all that once ennobled life. The believer in the old creeds, who fears that faith is decaying, and the supernatural life fading from the world, denounces the modern spirit as materialising and degrading. The conscience of mankind, he thinks, has become drugged and lethargic; our minds are fixed upon sensual pleasures, and our conduct regulated by a blind struggle for the maximum of luxurious enjoyment. The period in his eyes is a period of growing corruption; modern society suffers under a complication of mortal diseases, so widely spread and deeply seated that at present there is no hope of regeneration. The best hope is that its decay may provide the soil in which seed may be sown of a far-distant growth of happier

augury. Such dismal forebodings are no novelty. Every age produces its prophecies of coming woes. Nothing would be easier than to make out a catena of testimonies from great men at every stage of the world's history, declaring each in turn that the cup of iniquity was now at last overflowing, and that corruption had reached so unprecedented a step that some great catastrophe must be approaching. A man of unusually lofty morality is, for that reason, more keenly sensitive to the lowness of the average standard, and too easily accepts the belief that the evils before his eyes must be in fact greater, and not, as may perhaps be the case, only more vividly perceived, than those of the bygone ages. A call to repentance easily takes the form of an assertion that the devil is getting the upper hand; and we may hope that the pessimist view is only a form of the discontent which is a necessary condition of improvement. Anyhow, the diametrical conflict of prophecies suggests one remark which often impresses me. We are bound to call each other by terribly hard names. A gentleman assures me in print that I am playing the devil's game; depriving my victims, if I have any, of all the beliefs that can make life noble or happy, and doing my best to destroy the very first principles of morality. Yet I meet my adversary in the flesh, and find that he

treats me not only with courtesy, but with no inconsiderable amount of sympathy. He admits—by his actions and his argument—that I—the miserable sophist and seducer—have not only some good impulses, but have really something to say which deserves a careful and respectful answer. An infidel, a century or two ago, was supposed to have forfeited all claim to the ordinary decencies of life. Now I can say, and can say with real satisfaction, that I do not find any difference of creed, however vast in words, to be an obstacle to decent and even friendly treatment. I am at times tempted to ask whether my opponent can be quite logical in being so courteous; whether, if he is as sure as he says that I am in the devil's service, I ought not, as a matter of duty, to be encountered with the old dogmatism and arrogance. I shall, however, leave my friends of a different way of thinking to settle that point for themselves. I cannot doubt the sincerity of their courtesy, and I will hope that it is somehow consistent with their logic. Rather I will try to meet them in a corresponding spirit by a brief confession. I have often enough spoken too harshly and vehemently of my antagonists. I have tried to fix upon them too unreservedly what seemed to me the logical consequences of their dogmas. I have condemned their attempts at a milder interpretation of their creed as

proofs of insincerity, when I ought to have done more justice to the legitimate and lofty motives which prompted them. And I at least am bound by my own views to admit that even the antagonist from whose utterances I differ most widely may be an unconscious ally, supplementing rather than contradicting my theories, and in great part moved by aspirations which I ought to recognise even when allied with what I take to be defective reasoning. We are all amenable to one great influence. The vast shuttle of modern life is weaving together all races and creeds and classes. We are no longer shut up in separate compartments, where the mental horizon is limited by the area visible from the parish steeple; each little section can no longer fancy, in the old childish fashion, that its own arbitrary prejudices and dogmas are parts of the eternal order of things; or infer that in the indefinite region beyond, there live nothing but monsters and anthropophagi, and men whose heads grow beneath their shoulders. The annihilation of space has made us fellows as by a kind of mechanical compulsion; and every advance of knowledge has increased the impossibility of taking our little church—little in comparison with mankind, be it even as great as the Catholic Church—for the one pattern of right belief. The first effect of bringing remote nations and

classes into closer contact is often an explosion of antipathy; but in the long run it means a development of human sympathy. Wide, therefore, as is the opposition of opinions as to what is the true theory of the world—as to which is the divine and which the diabolical element—I fully believe that beneath the war of words and dogmas there is a growth of genuine toleration, and, we must hope, of ultimate conciliation.

This is manifest in another direction. The churches are rapidly making at least one discovery. They are beginning to find out that their vitality depends not upon success in theological controversy, but upon their success in meeting certain social needs and aspirations common to all classes. It is simply impossible for any thinking man at the present day to take any living interest, for example, in the ancient controversies. The "drum ecclesiastic" of the seventeenth century would sound a mere lullaby to us. Here and there a priest or a belated dissenting minister may amuse himself by threshing out once more the old chaff of dead and buried dogmas. There are people who can argue gravely about baptismal regeneration or apostolical succession. Such doctrines were once alive, no doubt, because they represented the form in which certain still living problems had then to present themselves.

They now require to be stated in a totally different shape, before we can even guess why they were once so exciting, or how men could have supposed their modes of attacking the question to be adequate. The Pope and General Booth still condemn each other's tenets; and in case of need would, I suppose, take down the old rusty weapons from the armoury. But each sees with equal clearness that the real stress of battle lies elsewhere. Each tries, after his own fashion, to give a better answer than the Socialists to the critical problems of to-day. We ought so far to congratulate both them and ourselves on the direction of their energies. Nay, can we not even co-operate, and put these hopeless controversies aside? Why not agree to differ about the questions which no one denies to be all but insoluble, and become allies in promoting morality? Enormous social forces find their natural channel through the churches; and if the beliefs inculcated by the church were not, as believers assert, the ultimate cause of progress, it is at least clear that they were not incompatible with progress. The church, we all now admit, whether by reason of or in spite of its dogmatic creed, was for ages one great organ of civilisation, and still exercises an incalculable influence. Why, then, should we, who cannot believe in the dogmas, yet fall into line with believers for

practical purposes? Churches insist verbally upon the importance of their dogma: they are bound to do so by their logical position; but, in reality, for them, as for us, the dogma has become in many ways a mere excrescence—a survival of barren formulæ which do little harm to anybody. Carlyle, in his quaint phrase, talked about the exodus from Houndsditch, but doubted whether it were yet time to cast aside the Hebrew old clothes. They have become threadbare and antiquated. That gives a reason to the intelligent for abandoning them; but, also, perhaps a reason for not quarrelling with those who still care to masquerade in them. Orthodox people have made a demand that the Board Schools should teach certain ancient doctrines about the nature of Christ; and the demand strikes some of us as preposterous if not hypocritical. But putting aside the audacity of asking unbelievers to pay for such teaching, one might be tempted to ask, what harm could it really do? Do you fancy for a moment that you can really teach a child of ten the true meaning of the Incarnation? Can you give him more than a string of words as meaningless as magical formulæ? I was brought up at the most orthodox of Anglican seminaries. I learned the Catechism, and heard lectures upon the Thirty-nine Articles. I never found that the teaching had ever any particular effect

upon my mind. As I grew up, the obsolete exuviæ of doctrine dropped off my mind like dead leaves from a tree. They could not get any vital hold in an atmosphere of tolerable enlightenment. Why should we fear the attempt to instil these fragments of decayed formulæ into the minds of children of tender age? Might we not be certain that they would vanish of themselves? They are superfluous, no doubt, but too futile to be of any lasting importance. I remember that, when the first Education Act was being discussed, mention was made of a certain Jew who not only sent his son to a Christian school, but insisted upon his attending all the lessons. He had paid his fees, he said, for education in the Gospels among other things, and he meant to have his money's worth. "But your son," it was urged, "will become a Christian." "I," he replied, "will take good care of that at home." Was not the Jew a man of sense? Can we suppose that the mechanical repetition of a few barren phrases will do either harm or good? As the child develops he will, we may hope, remember his multiplication table, and forget his fragments of the Athanasian Creed. Let the wheat and tares be planted together, and trust to the superior vitality of the more valuable plant. The sentiment might be expressed sentimentally as easily as cynically. We may urge, like

many sceptics of the last century, that Christianity should be kept "for the use of the poor," and renounced in the esoteric creed of the educated. Or we may urge the literary and æsthetic beauty of the old training, and wish it to be preserved to discipline the imagination, though we may reject its value as a historical statement of fact.

The audience which I am addressing has, I presume, made up its mind upon such views. They come too late. It might have been a good thing, had it been possible, to effect the transition from old to new without a violent convulsion: good, if Christian conceptions had been slowly developed into more simple forms; if the beautiful symbols had been retained till they could be impregnated with a new meaning; and if the new teaching of science and philosophy had gradually percolated into the ancient formulæ without causing a disruption. Possibly the Protestant Reformation was a misfortune, and Erasmus saw the truth more clearly than Luther. I cannot go into might-have-beens. We have to deal with facts. A conspiracy of silence is impossible about matters which have been vehemently discussed for centuries. We have to take sides; and we at least have agreed to take the side of the down-right thinker, who will say nothing that he does not believe, and hide nothing that he does believe, and

speak out his mind without reservation or economy and accommodation. Indeed, as things are, any other course seems to me to be impossible. I have spoken, for example, of General Booth. Many people heartily admire his schemes of social reform, and have been willing to subscribe for its support, without troubling themselves about his theology. I will make no objection; but I confess that I could not therefore treat that theology as either morally or intellectually respectable. It has happened to me once or twice to listen to expositions from orators of the Salvation Army. Some of them struck me as sincere though limited, and others as the victims of an overweening vanity. The oratory, so far as I could hear, consisted in stringing together an endless set of phrases about the blood of Christ, which, if they really meant anything, meant a doctrine as low in the intellectual scale as that of any of the objects of missionary enterprise. The conception of the transactions between God and man was apparently modelled upon the dealings of a petty tradesman. The "blood of Christ" was regarded like the panacea of a quack doctor, which will cure the sins of anybody who accepts the prescription. For anything I can say, such a creed may be elevating—relatively: elevating as slavery is said to have been elevating when it was a substitute for extermination. The hymns of

the Army may be better than public-house melodies, and the excitement produced less mischievous than that due to gin. But the best that I can wish for its adherents is, that they should speedily reach a point at which they could perceive their doctrines to be debasing. I hope, indeed, that they do not realise their own meaning: but I could almost as soon join in some old pagan ceremonies, gash my body with knives, or swing myself from a hook, as indulge in this variety of spiritual intoxication.

There are, it is true, plenty of more refined and intellectual preachers, whose sentiments deserve at least the respect due to tender and humane feeling. They have found a solution, satisfactory to themselves, of the great dilemma which presses on so many minds. A religion really to affect the vulgar must be a superstition; to satisfy the thoughtful, it must be a philosophy. Is it possible to contrive so to fuse the crude with the refined as to make at least a working compromise? To me personally, and to most of us living at the present day, the enterprise appears to be impracticable. My own experience is, I imagine, a very common one. When I ceased to accept the teaching of my youth, it was not so much a process of giving up beliefs, as of discovering that I had never really believed. The contrast between the genuine convictions which

guide and govern our conduct, and the professions which we were taught to repeat in church, when once realised, was too glaring. One belonged to the world of realities, and the other to the world of dreams. The orthodox formulæ represent, no doubt, a sentiment, an attempt to symbolise emotions which might be beautiful, or to indicate vague impressions about the tendency of things in general; but to put them side by side with real beliefs about facts was to reveal their flimsiness. The "I believe" of the creed seemed to mean something quite different from the "I believe" of politics and history and science. Later experience has only deepened and strengthened that feeling. Kind and loving and noble-minded people have sought to press upon me the consolations of their religion. I thank them in all sincerity; and I feel,—why should I not admit it?—that it may be a genuine comfort to set your melancholy to the old strain in which so many generations have embodied their sorrows and their aspirations. And yet to me, its consolation is an invitation to reject plain facts; to seek for refuge in a shadowy world of dreams and conjectures, which dissolve as you try to grasp them. The doctrine offered for my acceptance cannot be stated without qualifications and reserves and modifications, which make it as useless as it is vague and conjectural. I may learn

in time to submit to the inevitable; I cannot drug myself with phrases which evaporate as soon as they are exposed to a serious test. You profess to give me the only motives of conduct; and I know that at the first demand to define them honestly—to say precisely what you believe and why you believe it—you will be forced to withdraw, and explain and evade, and at last retire to the safe refuge of a mystery, which might as well be admitted at starting. As I have read and thought, I have been more and more impressed with the obvious explanation of these observations. How should the beliefs be otherwise than shadowy and illusory, when their very substance is made of doubts laboriously and ingeniously twisted into the semblance of convictions? In one way or other that is the characteristic mark of the theological systems of the present day. Proof is abandoned for persuasion. The orthodox believer professed once to prove the facts which he asserted and to show that his dogmas expressed the truth. He now only tries to show that the alleged facts don't matter, and that the dogmas are meaningless. Nearly two centuries ago, for example, a deist pointed out that the writer of the Book of Daniel, like other people, must have written after the events which he mentioned. All the learned, down to Dr. Pusey, denounced his theory, and declared his

argument to be utterly destructive of the faith. Now an orthodox professor will admit that the deist was perfectly right, and only tries to persuade himself that arguments from facts are superfluous. The supposed foundation is gone: the superstructure is not to be affected. What the keenest disputant now seeks to show is, not that the truth of the records can be established beyond reasonable doubt; but that no absolute contradiction in terms is involved in supposing that they correspond more or less roughly to something which may possibly have happened. So long as a thing is not proved false by mathematical demonstration, I may still continue to take it for a divine revelation, and to listen respectfully when experienced statesmen and learned professors assure me with perfect gravity that they can believe in Noah's flood or in the swine of Gadara. They have an unquestionable right to believe if they please: and they expect me to accept the facts for the sake of the doctrine. There, unluckily, I have a similar difficulty. It is the orthodox who are the systematic sceptics. The most famous philosophers of my youth endeavoured to upset the deist by laying the foundation of Agnosticism, arbitrarily tagged to an orthodox conclusion. They told me to believe a doctrine because it was totally impossible that I should know whether it was true or not, or indeed attach any

real meaning to it whatever. The highest altar, as Sir W. Hamilton said, was the altar to the unknown and unknowable God. Others, seeing the inevitable tendency of such methods, have done their best to find in that the Christian doctrine, rightly understood, the embodiment of the highest philosophy. It is the divine voice which speaks in our hearts, though it has caught some accretion of human passion and superstition. The popular versions are false and debased; the old versions of the Atonement, for example, monstrous; and the belief in the everlasting torture of sinners, a hideous and groundless caricature. With much that such men have said I could, of course, agree heartily; for, indeed, it expresses the strongest feelings which have caused religious revolt. But would it not be simpler to say, "the doctrine is not true," than to say, "it is true, but means just the reverse of what it was also taken to mean"? I prefer plain terms; and "without doubt he shall perish everlastingly" seems to be an awkward way of denying the endlessness of punishment. You cannot denounce the immorality of the old dogmas with the infidel, and then proclaim their infinite value with the believer. You defend the doctrine by showing that in its plain downright sense,—the sense in which it embodied popular imaginations,—it was false and shocking. The proposal to hold by the words

evacuated of the old meaning is a concession of the whole case to the unbeliever, and a substitution of sentiment and aspiration for a genuine intellectual belief. Explaining away, however dexterously and delicately, is not defending, but at once confessing error, and encumbering yourself with all the trammels of misleading associations. The more popular method, therefore, at the present day is not to rationalise, but to try to out-sceptic the sceptic. We are told that we have no solid ground from reason at all, and that even physical science is as full of contradictions as theology. Such enterprises, conducted with whatever ingenuity, are, as I believe, hopeless; but at least they are fundamentally and radically sceptical. That, under whatever disguises, is the true meaning of the Catholic argument, which is so persuasive to many. To prove the truth of Christianity by abstract reasoning may be hopeless; but nothing is easier than to persuade yourself to believe it, if once you will trust instinct in place of reason, and forget that instinct proves anything and everything. The success of such arguments with thoughtful men is simply a measure of the spread of scepticism. The conviction that truth is unattainable is the master argument for submitting to "authority". The "authority," in the scientific sense of any set of men who agree upon a doctrine,

varies directly as their independence of each other. Their "authority" in the legal sense varies as the closeness of their mutual dependence. As the consent loses its value logically, it gains in power of coercion. And therefore it is easy to substitute drilling for arguing, and to take up a belief as you accept admission to a society, as a matter of taste and feeling, with which abstract logic has nothing to do. The common dilemma—you must be a Catholic or an atheist—means, that theology is only tenable if you drill people into belief by a vast organisation appealing to other than logical motives.

I do not argue these points: I only indicate what I take to be your own conviction as well as mine. It seems to me, in fact, that the present state of mind—if we look to men's real thoughts and actions, not to their conventional phrases—is easily definable. It is simply a tacit recognition that the old orthodoxy cannot be maintained either by the evidence of facts or by philosophical argument. It has puzzled me sometimes to understand why the churches should insist upon nailing themselves down to the truth of their dogmas and their legendary history. Why cannot they say frankly, what they seem to be constantly on the verge of saying—Our dogmas and our history are not true, or not "true" in the

historical or scientific sense of the word? To ask for such truth in the sphere of theology is as pedantic as to ask for it in the sphere of poetry. Poetical truth means, not that certain events actually happened, or that the poetical "machinery" is to be taken as an existing fact; but that the poem is, so to speak, the projection of truths upon the cloudland of imagination. It reflects and gives sensuous images of truth; but it is only the Philistine or the blockhead who can seriously ask, is it true? Some such position seems to be really conceivable as an ultimate compromise. Put aside the prosaic insistence upon literal matter-of-fact truth, and we may all agree to use the same symbolism, and interpret it as we please. This seems to me to be actually the view of many thoughtful people, though for obvious reasons it is not often explicitly stated. One reason is, of course, the consciousness that the great mass of mankind requires plain, tangible motives for governing its life; and if it once be admitted that so much of the orthodox doctrine is mere symbolism or adumbration of truths, the admission would involve the loss of the truths so indicated. Moral conduct, again, and moral beliefs are supposed to depend upon some affirmation of these truths; and excellent people are naturally shy of any open admission which may

appear to throw doubt upon the ultimate grounds of morality.

Indeed, if it could be really proved that men have to choose between renouncing moral truths and accepting unproved theories, it might be right—I will not argue the point—to commit intellectual suicide. If the truth is that we are mere animals or mere automata, shall we sacrifice the truth, or sacrifice what we have at least agreed to call our higher nature? For us the dilemma has no force: for we do not admit the discrepancy. We believe that morality depends upon something deeper and more permanent than any of the dogmas that have hitherto been current in the churches. It is a product of human nature, not of any of these transcendental speculations or faint survivals of traditional superstitions. Morality has grown up independently of, and often in spite of, theology. The creeds have been good so far as they have accepted or reflected the moral convictions; but it is an illusion to suppose that they have generated it. They represent the dialect and the imagery by which moral truths have been conveyed to minds at certain stages of thought; but it is a complete inversion of the truth to suppose that the morality sprang out of them. From this point of view we must of necessity treat the great ethical questions independently. We cannot form

a real alliance with thinkers radically opposed to us. Divines tell us that we reject the one possible basis of morality. To us it appears that we are strengthening it, by severing it from a connection with doctrines arbitrary, incapable of proof, and incapable of retaining any consistent meaning. Theologians once believed that hell-fire was the ultimate sentence, and persecution the absolute duty of every Christian ruler. The churches which once burnt and exterminated are now only anxious to proclaim freedom of belief, and to cast the blame of persecution upon their rivals. Divines have discovered that the doctrine of hell-fire deserves all that infidels have said of it; and a member of Dante's church was arguing the other day that hell might on the whole be a rather pleasant place of residence. Doctrines which can thus be turned inside out are hardly desirable bases for morality. So the early Christians, again, were the Socialists of their age, and took a view of Dives and Lazarus which would commend itself to the Nihilists of to-day. The church is now often held up to us as the great barrier against Socialism, and the one refuge against subversive doctrines. In a well-known essay on "People whom one would have wished to have seen," Lamb and his friends are represented as agreeing that if Christ were to enter they would all

fall down and worship Him. It may have been so ; but if the man who best represents the ideas of early Christians were to enter a respectable society of to-day, would it not be more likely to send for the police ? When we consider such changes, and mark in another direction how the dogmas which once set half the world to cut the throats of the other half, have sunk into mere combinations of hard words, can we seriously look to the maintenance of dogmas, even in the teeth of reason, as a guarantee for ethical convictions ? What you call retaining the only base of morality, appears to us to be trying to associate morality with dogmas essentially arbitrary and unreasonable.

From this point of view it is naturally our opinion that we should promote all thorough discussion of great ethical problems in a spirit and by methods which are independent of the orthodox dogmas. There are many such problems undoubtedly of the highest importance. The root of all the great social questions of which I have spoken lies in the region of Ethics ; and upon that point, at least, we can go along with much that is said upon the orthodox side. We cannot, indeed, agree that Ethics can be adequately treated by men pledged to ancient traditions, employing antiquated methods, and always tempted to have an eye to the interest of their own creeds

and churches. But we can fully agree that ethical principles underlie all the most important problems. Every great religious reform has been stimulated by the conviction that the one essential thing is a change of spirit, not a mere modification of the external law, which has ceased to correspond to genuine beliefs and powerful motives. The commonest criticism, indeed, of all projectors of new Utopias is that they propose a change of human nature. The criticism really suggests a sound criterion. Unless the change proposed be practicable, the Utopia will doubtless be impossible. And unless some practicable change be proposed, the Utopia, even were it embodied in practice, would be useless. If the sole result of raising wages were an increase in the consumption of gin, wages might as well stay at a minimum. But the tacit assumption that all changes of human nature are impracticable is simply a cynical and unproved assertion. All of us here hold, I imagine, that human nature has in a sense been changed. We hold that, with all its drawbacks, progress is not an illusion ; that men have become at least more tolerant and more humane ; that ancient brutalities have become impossible ; and that the suffering of the weaker excites a keener sympathy. To say that, in that sense, human nature must be changed, is to say only that

the one sound criterion of all schemes for social improvement lies in their ethical tendency. The standard of life cannot be permanently raised unless you can raise the standard of motive. Old-fashioned political theorists thought that a simple change of the constitutional machinery would of itself remedy all evils, and failed to recognise that behind the institutions lie all the instincts and capabilities of the men who are to work them. A similar fallacy is prevalent, I fancy, in regard to what we call social reforms. Some scheme for a new mode of distributing the products of industry would, it is often assumed, remedy all social evils. To my thinking, no such change would do more than touch the superficial evils, unless it had also some tendency to call out the higher and repress the lower impulses. Unless we can to some extent change "human nature," we shall be weaving ropes of sand, or devising schemes for perpetual motion, for driving our machinery more effectively without applying fresh energy. We shall be falling into the old blunders; approving Jack Cade's proposal—as recorded by Shakespeare—that the three-hooped pot should have seven hoops; or attempting to get rid of poverty by converting the whole nation into paupers. No one, perhaps, will deny this in terms; and to admit it frankly is to admit that every scheme

must be judged by its tendency to "raise the manhood of the poor," and to make every man, rich and poor, feel that he is discharging a useful function in society. Old Robert Owen, when he began his reforms, rested his doctrine and his hopes of perfectibility upon the scientific application of a scheme for "the formation of character". His plans were crude enough, and fell short of success. But he had seen the real conditions of success; and when, in after years, he imagined that a new society might be made by simply collecting men of any character in a crowd, and inviting them to share alike, he fell into the inevitable failure. Modern Socialists might do well to remember his history.

Now it is, as I understand, primarily the aim of an Ethical Society to promote the rational discussion of these underlying ethical principles. We wish to contribute to the clearest understanding we can of the right ends to which human energy should be devoted, and of the conditions under which such devotion is most likely to be rewarded with success. We desire to see the great controversy carried on in the nearest possible approach to a scientific spirit. That phrase implies, as I have said, that we must abandon much of the old guidance. The lights by which our ancestors professed to direct their course are not for us supernatural signs, shining in a

transcendental region, but at most the beacons which they had themselves erected, and valuable as indications, though certainly not as infallible guides, to the right path. We must question everything, and be prepared to modify or abandon whatever is untenable. We must be scientific in spirit, in so far as we must trust nothing but a thorough and systematic investigation of facts, however the facts may be interpreted. Undoubtedly, the course marked out is long and arduous. It is perfectly true, moreover, as our antagonists will hasten to observe, that professedly scientific reasoners are hardly better agreed than their opponents. If they join upon some negative conclusions, and upon some general principles of method, they certainly do not reach the same results. They have at present no definite creed to lay down. I need only refer, for example, to one very obvious illustration. The men who were most conspicuous for their attempt to solve social problems by scientific methods, and most confident that they had succeeded, were, probably, those who founded the so-called "classical" political economy, and represented what is now called the individualist point of view. Government, they were apt to think, should do nothing but stand aside, see fair-play, and keep our knives from each other's throats and our hands out of each other's pockets,

Much as their doctrines were denounced, this view is still represented by the most popular philosopher of the day. And undoubtedly we shall do well to take to heart the obvious moral. If we still believe in the old-fashioned doctrines, we must infer that to work out a scientific doctrine is by no means to secure its acceptance. If we reject them we must argue that the mere claim to be scientific may inspire men with a premature self-confidence, which tends only to make their errors more systematic. When, however, I look at the actual course of controversy, I am more impressed by another fact. "Individualism" is sometimes met by genuine argument. More frequently, I think, it is met by simple appeal to sentiment. This kind of thing, we are told, is exploded; it is not up to date; it is as obsolete as the plesiosaurus; and therefore, without bothering ourselves about your reasoning, we shall simply neglect it. Talk as much as you please, we can get a majority on the other side. We shall disregard your arguments, and, therefore—it is a common piece of logic at the present day—your arguments must be all wrong. I must be content here with simply indicating my own view. I think, in fact, that, in this as in other cases, the true answer to extreme theorists would be very different. I hold that we would begin by admitting the immense value

of the lesson taught by the old individualists, if that be their right name. If they were precipitate in laying down "iron laws" and proclaiming inexorable necessity, they were perfectly right in pointing out that there are certain "laws of human nature," and conditions of social welfare, which will not be altered by simply declaring them to be unpleasant. They did an inestimable service in emphatically protesting against the system of forcibly suppressing, or trying to suppress, deep-seated evils, without an accurate preliminary diagnosis of the causes. And—not to go into remote questions—the "individualist" creed had this merit, which is related to our especial aims. The ethical doctrine which they preached may have had—I think that it had—many grave defects; but at least it involved a recognition of the truth which their opponents are too apt to shun or reject. They, at least, asserted strenuously the cardinal doctrine of the importance of individual responsibility. They might draw some erroneous inferences, but they could not put too emphatically the doctrine that men must not be taught to shift the blame of all their sufferings upon some mysterious entity called society, or expect improvement unless, among other virtues, they will cultivate the virtue of strenuous, unremitting, masculine self-help.

If this be at all true, it may indicate what I take to

be the aim of our society, or rather of us as members of an ethical society. We hold, that is, that the great problems of to-day have their root, so to speak, in an ethical soil. They will be decided one way or other by the view which we take of ethical questions. The questions, for example, of what is meant by social justice, what is the justification of private property, or the limits of personal liberty, all lead us ultimately to ethical foundations. The same is, of course, true of many other problems. The demand for political rights of women is discussed, rightly no doubt, upon grounds of justice, and takes us to some knotty points. Does justice imply the equality of the sexes; and, if so, in what sense of "equality"? And, beyond this, we come to the question, What would be the bearing of our principles upon the institution of marriage, and upon the family bond? No question can be more important, or more vitally connected with Ethics. We, at any rate, can no longer answer such problems by any traditional dogmatism. They—and many other questions which I need not specify—have been asked, and have yet to be answered. They will probably not be answered by a simple yes or no, nor by any isolated solution of a metaphysical puzzle. Undoubtedly, a vast mass of people will insist upon being consulted, and will adopt methods which cannot be regarded as

philosophical. Therefore, it is a matter of pressing importance that all people who can think at all should use their own minds, and should do their best to widen and strengthen the influence of the ablest thinkers. The chaotic condition of the average mind is our reason for trying to strengthen the influence, always too feeble, of the genuine thinkers. Much that passes itself off for thought is simply old prejudice in a new dress. Tradition has always this, indeed, to say for itself: that it represents the product of much unconscious reasoning from experience, and that it is at least compatible with such progress as has been hitherto achieved. Progress has in future to take place in the daylight, and under the stress of keen discussion from every possible point of view. It would be rash indeed to assume that we can hope to see the substitution of purely rational and scientific methods for the old haphazard and tentative blundering into slightly better things. It is possible enough that the creed of the future may, after all, be a compromise, admitting some elements of higher truth, but attracting the popular mind by concessions to superstition and ignorance. We can hardly hope to get rid of the rooted errors which have so astonishing a vitality. But we should desire, and, so far as in us lies, endeavour to secure the presence of the largest possible element of genuine and reasoned

conviction in the faith of our own and the rising generation.

I have not sought to say anything new. I have only endeavoured to define the general position which we, as I imagine, have agreed to accept. We hold in common that the old dogmas are no longer tenable, though we are very far from being agreed as to what should replace them. We have each, I dare say, our own theory; we agree that our theories, whatever they may be, are in need of strict examination, of verification, it may be, but it may be also of modification or rejection. We hope that such societies as this may in the first place serve as centres for encouraging and popularising the full and free discussion of the great questions. We wish that people who have reached a certain stage of cultivation should be made aware of the course which is being taken by those who may rightly claim to be in the van. We often wish to know, as well as we can, what is the direction of the deeper currents of thought; what genuine results, for example, have been obtained by historical criticism, especially as applied to the religious history of the world; we want to know what are the real points now at issue in the world of science; the true bearing of the theories of evolution, and so forth, which are known by name far beyond the circle in which their logical

reasoning is really appreciated; we want to know, again, what are the problems which really interest modern metaphysicians or psychologists; in what directions there seems to be a real promise of future achievement, and in what directions it seems to be proved by experience that any further expansion of intellectual energy is certain to result only in the discovery of mares' nests.

Matthew Arnold would have expressed this by saying that we are required to be made accessible to the influence of the *Zeitgeist*. There is a difficulty, no doubt, in discovering by what signs we may recognise the utterances of the *Zeitgeist*; and distinguish between loyalty to the real intellectual leaders and a simple desire to be arrayed in the last new fashion in philosophy. There is no infallible sign; and, yet, a genuine desire to discover the true lines in which thought is developing, is not of the less importance. Arnold, like others, pointed the moral by a contrast between England and Germany. The best that has been done in England, it is said, has generally been done by amateurs and outsiders. They have, perhaps, certain advantages, as being less afraid to strike into original paths, and even the originality of ignorance is not always, though it may be in nine cases out of ten, a name for fresh blundering. But if sporadic English writers have

now and then hit off valuable thoughts, there can be no doubt that we have had a heavy price to pay. The comparative absence of any class, devoted, like German professors, to a systematic and combined attempt to spread the borders of knowledge and speculation, has been an evil which is the more felt in proportion as specialisation of science and familiarity with previous achievements become more important. It would be very easy to give particular instances of our backwardness. How different would have been the course of English church history, said somebody, if Newman had only known German! He would have breathed a larger air, and might have desisted—I suppose that was the meaning—from the attempt to put life into certain dead bones. And with equal truth, it may be urged, how much better work might have been done by J. S. Mill if he had really read Kant! He might not have been converted, but he would have been saved from maintaining in their crude form, doctrines which undoubtedly require modification. Under his reign, English thought was constantly busied with false issues, simply from ignorance of the most effective criticism. It is needless to point out how much time is wasted in the defence of positions that have long been turned by the enemy from sheer want of acquaintance with the relevant evidence, or with

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the logic that has been revealed by the slow thrashing out of thorough controversy. It would be invidious perhaps to insist too much upon another obvious result: the ease with which a man endowed with a gift of popular rhetoric, and a facility for catching at the current phrases, can set up as a teacher, however palpable to the initiated may be his ignorance. Scientific thought has perhaps as much to fear from the false prophets who take its name as from the open enemies who try to stifle its voice. I would rather emphasise another point, perhaps less generally remarked. The study has its idols as well as its market-place. Certain weaknesses are developed in the academical atmosphere as well as in the arenas of public discussion. Freeman used to say that English historians had avoided certain errors into which German writers of far greater knowledge and more thorough scholarship had fallen, simply because points were missed by a professor in a German university which were plain to those who, like many Englishmen, had to take a part in actual political work. I think that this is not without a meaning for us. We have learnt, very properly, to respect German research and industry; and we are trying in various directions to imitate their example. Perhaps it would be as well to keep an eye upon some German weaknesses. A philosophy made by

professors is apt to be a philosophy for pedants. A professor is bound to be omniscient; he has to have an answer to everything; he is tempted to construct systems which will pass muster in the lecture-room, and to despise the rest of their applicability to daily life. I confess myself to be old-fashioned enough to share some of the old English prejudices against those gigantic structures which have been thrown out by imposing philosophers, who evolved complete systems of metaphysics and logic and religion and politics and æsthetics out of their own consciousness. We have multiplied professors of late, and professors are bound to write books, and to magnify the value of their own studies. They must make a show of possessing an encyclopædic theory which will explain everything and take into account all previous theories. Sometimes, perhaps, they will lose themselves in endless subtleties and logomachies and construct cobwebs of the brain, predestined to the rubbish-heap of extinct philosophies. It is enough, however, to urge that a mere student may be the better for keeping in mind the necessity of keeping in mind real immediate human interests; as the sentimental-ist has to be reminded of the importance of strictly logical considerations. And I think too that a very brief study of the most famous systems of old days will convince us that philosophers should be

content with a more modest attitude than they have sometimes adopted; give up the pretensions to framing off-hand theories of things in general, and be content to puzzle out a few imperfect truths which may slowly work their way into the general structure of thought. I wish to speak humbly as befits one who cannot claim any particular authority for his opinion. But, in all humility, I suggest that if we can persuade men of reputation in the regions where subtle thought and accurate research are duly valued, we shall be doing good, not only to ourselves, but, if I may whisper it, to them. We value their attainments so highly that we desire their influence to spread beyond the narrow precinct of university lecture-rooms; and their thoughts be, at the same time, stimulated and vitalised by bringing them into closer contact with the problems which are daily forced upon us in the business of daily life. A divorce between the men of thought and the men of action is really bad for both. Whatever tends to break up the intellectual stupor of large classes, to rouse their minds, to increase their knowledge of the genuine work that is being done, to provide them even with more of such recreations as refine and invigorate, must have our sympathy, and will be useful both to those who confer and to those who receive instruction. So, after all, a philosopher can

learn few things of more importance than the art of translating his doctrines into language intelligible and really instructive to the outside world. There was a period when real thinkers, as Locke and Berkeley and Butler and Hume, tried to express themselves as pithily and pointedly as possible. They were, say some of their critics, very shallow: they were over-anxious to suit the taste of wits and the town: and in too much fear of the charge of pedantry. Well, if some of our profounder thinkers would try for once to pack all that they really have to say as closely as they can, instead of trying to play every conceivable change upon every thought that occurs to them, I fancy that they would be surprised both at the narrowness of the space which they would occupy and the comparative greatness of the effect they would produce.

An ethical society should aim at supplying a meeting-place between the expert and specialist on one side, and, on the other, with the men who have to apply ideas to the complex concretes of political and social activity. How far we can succeed in furthering that aim I need not attempt to say. But I will conclude by reverting to some thoughts at which I hinted at starting. You may think that I have hardly spoken in a very sanguine or optimistic tone. I have certainly admitted the existence of

enormous difficulties and the probabilities of very imperfect success. I cannot think that the promised land of which we are taking a Pisgah sight is so near or the view so satisfactory as might be wished. A mirage like that which attended our predecessors may still be exercising illusions for us ; and I anticipate less an immediate fruition, than a beginning of another long cycle of wanderings through a desert, let us hope rather more fertile than that which we have passed. If this be something of a confession you may easily explain it by personal considerations. In an old controversy which I was reading the other day, one of the disputants observed that his adversary held that the world was going from bad to worse. "I do not wonder at the opinion," he remarks ; "for I am every day more tempted to embrace it myself, since every day I am leaving youth further behind." I am old enough to feel the force of that remark. Without admitting senility, I have lived long enough, that is, to know well that for me the brighter happiness is a thing of the past ; that I have to look back even to realise what it means ; and to feel that a sadder colouring is conferred upon the internal world by the eye "which hath kept watch o'er man's mortality". I have watched the brilliant promise of many contemporaries eclipsed by premature death ; and have too often had to apply Newton's remark,

"If that man had lived, we might have known something". Lights which once cheered me have gone out, and are going out all too rapidly ; and, to say nothing of individuals, I have also lived long enough to watch the decay of once flourishing beliefs. I can remember, only too vividly, the confident hope with which many young men, whom I regarded as the destined leaders of progress, affirmed that the doctrines which they advocated were going forth conquering and to conquer ; and though I may still think that those doctrines had a permanent value, and were far from deserving the reproaches now often levelled at them, I must admit that we greatly exaggerated our omniscience. I am often tempted, I confess, to draw the rather melancholy moral that some of my younger friends maybe destined to disillusionment, and may be driven some thirty years hence to admit that their present confidence was a little in excess.

I admit all this : but I do not admit that my view could sanction despondency. I can see perhaps ground for foreboding which I should once have rejected. I can realise more distinctly, not only the amount of misery in the world, but the amount of misdirected energy, the dulness of the average intellect, and the vast deadweight of superstition and dread of the light with which all improvement must have to reckon. And yet I also feel that, if a com-

placent optimism be impossible, the world was never so full of interest. When we complain of the stress and strain and over-excitement of modern society we indicate, I think, a real evil; but we also tacitly admit that no one has any excuse for being dull. In every direction there is abundant opportunity for brave and thoughtful men to find the fullest occupation for whatever energy they may possess. There is work to be found everywhere in this sense, and none but the most torpid can find an excuse for joining the spiritually unemployed. The fields, surely, are white for the harvest, though there are weeds enough to be extirpated, and hard enough furrows to be ploughed. We know what has been done in the field of physical science. It has made the world infinite. The days of the old pagan, "suckled in some creed outworn," are regretted in Wordsworth's sonnet; for the old pagan held to the poetical view that a star was the chariot of a deity. The poor deity, however, had, in fact, a duty as monotonous as that of a driver in the Underground Railway. To us a star is a signal of a new world; it suggests universe beyond universe; sinking into the infinite abysses of space; we see worlds forming or decaying and raising at every moment problems of a strange fascination. The prosaic truth is really more poetical than the old figment of the childish

imagination. The first great discovery of the real nature of the stars did, in fact, logically or not, break up more effectually than perhaps any other cause, the old narrow and stifling conception of the universe represented by Dante's superlative power; and made incredible the systems based on the conception that man can be the centre of all things and the universe created for the sake of this place. It is enough to point to the similar change due to modern theories of evolution. The impassable barriers of thought are broken down. Instead of the verbal explanation, which made every plant and animal an ultimate and inexplicable fact, we now see in each a movement in an indefinite series of complex processes, stretching back further than the eye can reach into the indefinite past. If we are sometimes stunned by the sense of inconceivable vastness, we feel, at least, that no intellectual conqueror need ever be affected by the old fear. For him there will always be fresh regions to conquer. Every discovery suggests new problems; and though knowledge may be simplified and codified, it will always supply a base for fresh explanations of the indefinite regions beyond. Can that which is true of the physical sciences be applied in any degree to the so-called moral sciences? To Bentham, I believe, is ascribed the wish that he could fall asleep and be waked at

the end of successive centuries, to take note of the victories achieved in the intervals by his utilitarianism. Tennyson, in one of his youthful poems, played with the same thought. It would be pleasant, as the story of the sleeping beauty suggested, to rise every hundred years to mark the progress made in science and politics; and to see the "Titanic forces" that would come to the birth in divers climes and seasons; for we, he says—

For we are Ancients of the earth,
And in the morning of the times.

Tennyson, if this expressed his serious belief, seems to have lost his illusions; and it is probable enough that Bentham's would have had some unpleasant surprises could his wish have been granted. It is more than a century since his doctrine was first revealed, and yet the world has not become converted; and some people doubt whether it ever will be. If, indeed, Bentham's speculations had been adopted; if we had all become convinced that morality means aiming at the greatest happiness of the greatest number; if we were agreed as to what is happiness, and what is the best way of promoting it,—there would still have been a vast step to take, no less than to persuade people to desire to follow the lines of conduct which tend to minimise unhappiness. The mere intellectual conviction that this or that will be useful is quite a different thing from the desire.

You no more teach men to be moral by giving them a sound ethical theory, than you teach them to be good shots by explaining the theory of projectiles. A religion implies a philosophy, but a philosophy is not by itself a religion. The demand that it should be is, I hold, founded upon a wrong view as to the relation between the abstract theory and the art of conduct. To convert the world you have not merely to prove your theories, but to stimulate the imagination, to discipline the passions, to provide modes of utterance for the emotions and symbols which may represent the fundamental beliefs—briefly, to do what is done by the founders of the great religions. To transmute speculation into action is a problem of tremendous difficulty, and I only glance in the briefest way at its nature. We, I take it, as members of Ethical Societies, have no claim to be, even in the humblest way, missionaries of a new religion: but are simply interested in doing what we can to discuss in a profitable way the truths which it ought to embody or reflect. But that is itself a work of no trifling importance; and we may imagine that a Bentham, refreshed by his century's slumber, and having dropped some of his little personal vanities, would on the whole be satisfied with what he saw. If Bacon could again come to life, he too would find that the methods which he contemplated and the

doctrines which he preached were narrow and refutative; yet his prophecies of scientific growth have been more than realised by his successors, modifying, in some ways, rejecting his principles. And so Bentham might hold to-day that, although his sacred formula was not so exhaustive or precise as he fancied, yet the conscious and deliberate pursuit of the happiness of mankind had taken a much more important place in the aspirations of the time. He would see that the vast changes which have taken place in society, vast beyond all previous conception, were bringing up ever new problems, requiring more elaborate methods, and more systematic reasoning. He would observe that many of the abuses which he denounced have disappeared, and that though progress does not take place along the precise lines which he laid down, there is both a clearer recognition of the great ends of conduct, and a general advance in the direction which he desired. That this can be carried on by promoting a free and full discussion of first principles; that the great social evils which still exist can be diminished, and the creed of the future, however dim its outlines may be to our perception, may be purified as much as possible from ancient prejudice and superstition, is our faith; and however little we can do to help in carrying out that process, we desire to do that little.

April 5. 1896.

SCIENCE AND POLITICS.*

It is with great pleasure that I address you as president of this Society. Your main purpose, as I understand, is to promote the serious study of political and social problems in a spirit purged from the prejudice and narrowness of mere party conflict. You desire, that is, to promote a scientific investigation of some of the most important topics to which the human mind can devote itself. There is no purpose of which I approve more cordially: yet the very statement suggests a doubt. To speak of science and politics together is almost to suggest irony. And if politics be taken in the ordinary sense; if we think of the discussions by which the immediate fate of measures and of ministries is decided, I should be inclined to think that they belong to a sphere of thought to which scientific thought is hardly applicable, and in which I should be personally an unwarrantable intruder. My friends have sometimes accused me, indeed, of indifference

* Address to the Social and Political Education League, 29th March, 1892.

to politics. I confess that I have never been able to follow the details of party warfare with the interest which they excite in some minds: and reasons, needless to indicate, have caused me to stray further and further away from intercourse with the society in which such details excite a predominant—I do not mean to insinuate an excessive—interest. I feel that if I were to suggest any arguments bearing directly upon home rule or disestablishment, I should at once come under that damnatory epithet “academic,” which so neatly cuts the ground from under the feet of the political amateur. Moreover, I recognise a good deal of justice in the implied criticism. An active politician who wishes to impress his doctrines upon his countrymen, should have a kind of knowledge to which I can make no pretension. I share the ordinary feelings of awful reverence with which the human bookworm looks up to the man of business. He has faculties which in me are rudimentary, but which I can appreciate by their contrast to my own feebleness. The “knowledge of the world” ascribed to lawyers, to politicians, financiers, and such persons, like the “knowledge of the human heart” so often ascribed to dramatists and novelists, represents, I take it, a very real kind of knowledge; but it is rather an instinct than a set of definite principles; a power of

somehow estimating the tendencies and motives of their fellow-creatures in a mass by rule of thumb, rather than by any distinctly assignable logical process; only to be gained by long experience and shrewd observation of men and cities. Such a faculty, as it reaches sound results without employing explicit definitions and syllogisms and inductive processes, sometimes inclines its possessors to look down too contemptuously upon the closet student.

While, however, I frankly confess my hopeless incapacity for taking any part in the process by which party platforms are constructed, I should be ashamed to admit that I was not very keenly interested in political discussions which seem to me to touch vitally important matters. And fully recognising the vast superiority of the practical man in his own world, I also hold that he should not treat me and my like as if we, according to the famous comparison, were black beetles, and he at the opposite pole of the universe. There exists, in books at least, such a thing as political theory, apart from that claiming to underlie the immediate special applications. Your practical man is given to appealing to such theories now and then; though I confess that he too often leaves the impression of having taken them up on the spur of the moment to round a peroration and to give dignity to a popular cry:

and that, in his lips, they are apt to sound so crude and artificial that one can only wonder at his condescending to notice them. He ridicules them as the poorest of platitudes whenever they are used by an antagonist, and one can only hope that his occasional homage implies that he too has a certain belief that there ought to be, and perhaps may somewhere be, a sound theory, though he has not paid it much attention. Well, we, I take it, differ from him simply in this respect, that we believe more decidedly that such theory has at least a potential existence; and that if hitherto it is a very uncertain and ambiguous guide, the mere attempt to work it out seriously may do something to strengthen and deepen our practical political convictions. A man of real ability, who is actively engaged in politics without being submerged by merely political intrigues, can hardly fail to wish at least to institute some kind of research into the principles which guide his practice. To such a desire we may attribute some very stimulating books, such, for example, as Bagehot's *Physics and Politics* or Mr. Bryce's philosophical study of the United States. What I propose to do is to suggest a few considerations as to the real value and proper direction of these arguments, which lie, as it were, on the borderland between the immediate "platform" and the abstract theory.

Philosophers have given us the name "Sociology"—a barbarous name, say some—for the science which deals with the subject matter of our inquiries. Is it more than a name for a science which may or may not some day come into existence? What is science? It is simply organised knowledge; that part of our knowledge which is definite, established beyond reasonable doubt, and which achieves its task by formulating what are called "scientific laws". Laws in this sense are general formulæ, which, when the necessary data are supplied, will enable us to extend our knowledge beyond the immediate facts of perception. Given a planet, moving at a given speed in a given direction, and controlled by given attractive forces, we can determine its place at a future moment. Or given a vegetable organism in a given environment, we can predict within certain limits the way in which it will grow, although the laws are too obscure and too vague to enable us to speak of it with any approach to the precision of astronomy. And we should have reached a similar stage in sociology if from a given social or political constitution adopted by a given population, we could prophesy what would be the results. I need not say that any approximation to such achievements is almost indefinitely distant. Personal claims to such powers of prediction rather tend to bring discredit

upon the embryo science. Coleridge gives in the *Biographia Literaria* a quaint statement of his own method. On every great occurrence, he says, he tried to discover in past history the event that most nearly resembled it. He examined the original authorities. "Then fairly subtracting the points of difference from the points of likeness," as the balance favoured the former or the latter, he conjectured that the result would be the same, or different. So, for example, he was able to prophesy the end of the Spanish rising against Napoleon from the event of the war between Philip II. and the Dutch provinces. That is, he cried, "Heads!" and on this occasion the coin did not come down tails. But I need hardly point out how impossible is the process of political arithmetic. What is meant by adding or subtracting in this connection? Such a rule of three would certainly puzzle me, and, I fancy, most other observers. We may say that the insurrection of a patriotic people, when they are helped from without, and their oppressors have to operate from a distant base and to fight all Europe at the same time, will often succeed; and we may often be right; but we should not give ourselves the airs of prophets on that account. There are many superficial analogies of the same character. My predecessor, Professor Dicey, pointed out some of

them, to confirm his rather depressing theory that history is nothing but an old almanac. Let me take a common one, which, I think, may illustrate our problem. There is a certain analogy between the cases of Cæsar, Cromwell, and Napoleon. In each case we have a military dictatorship as the final outcome of a civil war. Some people imagined that this analogy would apply to the United States, and that Washington or Grant would be what was called the man on horseback. The reasoning really involved was, in fact, a very simple one. The destruction of an old system of government makes some form of dictatorship the only alternative to chaos. It therefore gives a chance to the one indisputable holder of power in its most unmistakable shape, namely, to the general of a disciplined army. A soldier accordingly assumed power in each of the three first cases, although the differences between the societies ruled by the Roman, the English and the French dictators are so vast that further comparison soon becomes idle. Neither Washington nor Grant had the least chance of making themselves dictators had they wished, because the civil wars had left governments perfectly uninjured and capable of discharging all their functions, and had not produced a regular army with interests of its own. In this and other cases, I should say that such an analogy may be

to some extent instructive, but I should certainly deny that there was anything like a scientific induction. We, happily, can reason to some extent upon political matters by the help of simple common sense before it has undergone that process of organisation, of reduction to precise measurable statements, which entitles it to be called a scientific procedure. The resemblance of Washington to Cromwell was of the external and superficial order. It may be compared to those analogies which exist between members of different natural orders without implying any deeper resemblance. A whale, we know, is like a fish in so far as he swims about in the sea, and he has whatever fishlike qualities are implied in the ability to swim. He will die on land, though not from the same causes. But, physiologically, he belongs to a different race, and we should make blunders if we argued from the external likeness to a closer resemblance. Or, to drop what may be too fanciful a comparison, it may be observed that all assemblies of human beings may be contrasted in respect of being numerous or select, and have certain properties in consequence. We may therefore make some true and general propositions about the contrasts between the action of small and large consultative bodies which will apply to many widely different cases. A

good many, and, I think, some really valuable observations of this kind have been made, and form the substance of many generalisations laid down as to the relative advantages of democracy and aristocracy. Now I should be disposed to say that such remarks belong rather to the morphology than the physiology of the social organism. They indicate external resemblances between bodies of which the intimate constitution and the whole mode of growth and conditions of vitality, may be entirely different. Such analogies, then, though not without their value, are far from being properly scientific.

What remains? There is, shall we say, no science of sociology—merely a heap of vague, empirical observations, too flimsy to be useful in strict logical inference? I should, I confess, be apt to say so myself. Then, you may proceed, is it not idle to attempt to introduce a scientific method? And to that I should emphatically reply, No! it is of the highest importance. The question, then, will follow, how I can maintain these two positions at once. And to that I make, in the first place, this general answer: Sociology is still of necessity a very vague body of approximate truths. We have not the data necessary for obtaining anything like precise laws. A mathematician can tell you precisely what

he means when he speaks of bodies moving under the influence of an attraction which varies inversely as the square of the distance. But what are the attractive forces which hold together the body politic? They are a number of human passions, which even the acutest psychologists are as yet quite unable to analyse or to classify: they act according to laws of which we have hardly the vaguest inkling; and, even if we possessed any definite laws, the facts to which they have to be applied are so amazingly complex as to defy any attempt at assigning results. There is, so far as I can see, no ground for supposing that there is or ever can be a body of precise truths at all capable of comparison with the exact sciences. But this obvious truth, though it implies very narrow limits to our hopes of scientific results, does not force us to renounce the application of scientific method. The difficulty applies in some degree even to physiology as compared with physics, as the vital phenomena are incomparably more complex than those with which we have to deal in the simpler sciences; and yet nobody doubts that a scientific physiology is a possibility, and, to some extent, a reality. Now, in sociology, however imperfect it may be, we may still apply the same methods which have been so fruitful in other departments of thought. We may undertake it in the scientific spirit which

depends upon patient appeal to observation, and be guided by the constant recollection that we are dealing with an organism, the various relations of whose constituent parts are determined by certain laws to which we may, perhaps, make some approximation. We may do so, although their mutual actions and reactions are so complex and subtle that we can never hope to disentangle them with any approach to completeness. And one test of the legitimacy of our methods will be, that although we do not hope to reach any precise and definitely assignable law, we yet reach, or aim at reaching, results which, while wanting in precision, want precision alone to be capable of incorporation in an ideal science such as might actually exist for a supernatural observer of incomparably superior powers. A man who knows, though he knows nothing more, that the moon is kept in its orbit by forces similar to or identical with those which cause the fall of an apple, knows something which only requires more definite treatment to be made into a genuine theory of gravitation. If, on the contrary, he merely pays himself with words, with vague guesses about occult properties, or a supposed angel who directs the moon's course, he is still in the unscientific stage. His theory is not science still in the vague, but something which stops the way to science. Now, if

we can never hope to get further than the step which in the problem of gravitation represents the first step towards science, yet that step may be a highly important one. It represents a diversion of the current of thought from such channels as end in mere shifting sands of speculation, into the channel which leads towards some definite conclusion, verifiable by experience, and leading to conclusions, not very precise, but yet often pointing to important practical results. It may, perhaps, be said that, as the change which I am supposing represents only a change of method and spirit, it can achieve no great results in actual assignable truth. Well! a change of method and spirit is, in my opinion, of considerable importance, and very vague results would still imply an improvement in the chaos of what now passes for political philosophy. I will try to indicate very briefly the kind of improvement of which we need not despair.

First of all, I conceive that, as I have indicated, a really scientific habit of thought would dispel many hopeless logomachies. When Burke, incomparably the greatest of our philosophical politicians, was arguing against the American policy of the Government, he expressed his hatred of metaphysics—the “Serbonian bog,” as he called it, in which whole armies had been lost. The point at which he aimed was the fruitless discussion of abstract rights, which

prevented people from applying their minds to the actual facts, and from seeing that metaphysical entities of that kind were utterly worthless when they ceased to correspond to the wants and aspirations of the peoples concerned. He could not, as he said, draw up an indictment against a nation, because he could not see how such troubles as had arisen between England and the Colonies were to be decided by technical distinctions such as passed current at *nisi prius*. I am afraid that the mode of reasoning condemned by Burke has not yet gone out of fashion. I do not wish to draw down upon myself the wrath of metaphysicians. I am perfectly willing that they should go on amusing themselves by attempting to deduce the first principles of morality from abstract considerations of logical affirmation and denial. But I will say this, that, in any case, and whatever the ultimate meaning of right and wrong, all political and social questions must be discussed with a continual reference to experience, to the contents as well as to the form of their metaphysical concepts. It is, to my mind, quite as idle to attempt to determine the value, say, of a political theory by reasoning independent of the character and circumstances of the nation and its constituent members, as to solve a medical question by abstract formulæ, instead of by careful, prolonged, and search-

ing investigation into the constitution of the human body. I think that this requires to be asserted so long as popular orators continue to declaim, for example, about the "rights of man," or the doctrines of political equality. I by no means deny, or rather I should on due occasion emphatically assert, that the demands covered by such formulæ are perfectly right, and that they rest upon a base of justice. But I am forced to think that, as they are generally stated, they can lead to nothing but logomachy. When a man lays down some such sweeping principle, his real object is to save himself the trouble of thinking. So long as the first principles from which he starts are equally applicable,—and it is of the very nature of these principles that they should be equally applicable to men in all times and ages, to Englishmen and Americans, Hindoos and Chinese, Negroes and Australians,—they are worthless for any particular case, although, of course, they may be accidentally true in particular cases. In short, leaving to the metaphysicians—that is, postponing till the Greek Kalends—any decision as to the ultimate principles, I say that every political theory should be prepared to justify itself by an accurate observation of the history and all the various characteristics of the social organisation to which it is to be applied.

This points to the contrast to which I have referred:

the contrast between the keen vigorous good sense upon immediate questions of the day, to which I often listen with the unfeigned admiration due to the shrewd man of business, and the paltry little outworn platitudes which he introduces when he wants to tag his arguments with sounding principles. I think, to take an example out of harm's way, that an excellent instance is found in the famous American treatise, the *Federalist*. It deserves all the credit it has won so long as the authors are discussing the right way to form a constitution which may satisfy the wants and appease the prejudices then actually existing. In spite of such miscalculations as beset all forecasts of the future, they show admirable good sense and clear appreciation. But when they think it necessary to appeal to Montesquieu, to tag their arguments from common sense with little ornamental formulæ learnt from philosophical writings, they show a very amiable simplicity; but they also seem to me to sink at once to the level of a clever prize essay in a university competition. The mischief may be slight when we are merely considering literary effect. But it points to a graver evil. In political discussions, the half-trained mind has strong convictions about some particular case, and then finds it easiest to justify its conviction by some sweeping general principle. It really starts, speaking in terms of logic,

by assuming the truth of its minor and takes for granted that any major which will cover the minor is therefore established. Nothing saves so much trouble in thinking as the acceptance of a good sounding generality or a self-evident truth. Where your poor scientific worker plods along, testing the truth of his argument at every point, making qualifications and reservations, and admitting that every general principle may require to be modified in concrete cases, you can thus both jump to your conclusion and assume the airs of a philosopher. It is, I fancy, for this reason that people have such a tendency to lay down absolute rules about really difficult points. It is so much easier to say at once that all drinking ought to be suppressed, than to consider how, in actual circumstances, sobriety can be judiciously encouraged; and by assuming a good self-evident law and denouncing your opponents as immoral worshippers of expediency, you place yourself in an enviable position of moral dignity and inaccessibility. No argument can touch you. These abstract rules, too, have the convenience of being strangely ambiguous. I have been almost pathetically affected when I have observed how some thoroughly commonplace person plumes himself on preserving his consistency because he sticks resolutely to his party dogmas, even when their whole meaning

has evaporated. Some English radicals boasted of consistency because they refused to be convinced by experience that republicans under a military dictator could become tyrannous and oppressive. At the present day, I see many worthy gentlemen, who from being thorough-going individualists, have come to swallow unconsciously the first principles of socialism without the least perception that they have changed, simply because a new meaning has been gradually insinuated into the sacred formulæ. Scientific habits of thought, I venture to suggest, would tend to free a man from the dominion of these abstract phrases, which sometimes make men push absolute dogmas to extravagant results, and sometimes blind them to the complete transformation which has taken place in their true meaning. The great test of statesmanship, it is said, is the knowledge how and when to make a compromise, and when to hold fast to a principle. The tendency of the thoughtless is to denounce all compromise as wicked, and to stick to a form of words without bothering about the real meaning. Belief in "fads"—I cannot avoid the bit of slang—and singular malleability of real convictions are sometimes generated just by want of serious thought; and, at any rate, both phenomena are very common at present.

This suggests another aspect of reasoning in a

scientific spirit, namely, the importance which it attaches to a right comprehension of the practicable. The scientific view is sometimes described as fatalistic. A genuine scientific theory implies a true estimate of the great forces which mould institutions, and therefore a true apprehension of the limits within which they can be modified by any proposed change. We all remember Sydney Smith's famous illustration, in regard to the opposition to the Reform Bill, of Mrs. Partington's attempt to stop the Atlantic with her mop. Such an appeal is sometimes described as immoral. Many politicians, no doubt, find in it an excuse for immoral conduct. They assume that such and such a measure is inevitable, and therefore they think themselves justified for advocating it, even though they hold it to be wrong. Indeed, I observe that many excellent journalists are apparently unable to perceive any distinction between the assertion that a measure will be passed, and that it ought to be passed. Undoubtedly, if I think a measure unjust, I ought to say that it is unjust, even if I am sure that it will nevertheless be carried, and, in some cases, even though I may be a martyr to my opposition. If it is inevitable, it can be carried without my help, and my protest may at least sow a seed for future reaction. But this is no answer to the argument of Sydney Smith when taken in a reasonable

sense. The opposition to the Reform Bill was a particular case of the opposition to the advance of democracy. The statement that democracy has advanced and will advance, is sometimes taken to be fatalistic. People who make the assertion may answer for themselves. I should answer, as I think we should all answer now, that the advance of democracy, desirable or undesirable, depended upon causes far too deep and general to be permanently affected by any Reform Bill. It was only one aspect of vast social changes which had been going on for centuries; and to propose to stop it by throwing out the Reform Bill was like proposing to stop a child's growth by forcing him to go on wearing his long clothes. Sydney Smith's answer might be immoral if it simply meant, don't fight because you will be beaten. It may often be a duty to take a beating. But it was, perhaps, rather a way of saying that if you want to stop the growth of democracy, you must begin by altering the course of the social, intellectual and moral changes which have been operating through many generations, and that unless you can do that, it is idle to oppose one particular corollary, and so to make a revolution inevitable, instead of a peaceful development. To say that any change is impossible in the absolute sense, may be fatalism; but it is simple good sense, and therefore good

science, to say that to produce any change whatever you must bring to bear a force adequate to the change. When a man's leg is broken, you can't expect to heal it by a bit of sticking-plaster; a pill is not supposed, now, to be a cure for an earthquake; and to insist upon such facts is not to be fatalistic, but simply to say that a remedy must bear some proportion to an evil. It is a commonplace to observe upon the advantage which would have been gained if our grandfathers would have looked at the French Revolution scientifically. A terrible catastrophe had occurred abroad. The true moral, as we all see now, was that England should make such reforms as would obviate the danger of a similar catastrophe at home. The moral which too many people drew was too often, that all reforms should be stopped; with the result that the evils grew worse and social strata more profoundly alienated. It is a first principle of scientific reasoning, that a break-down of social order implies some antecedent defect, demanding an adequate remedy. It is a primary assumption of party argument, that the opposite party is wholly wrong, that its action is perfectly gratuitous, and either causeless or produced by the direct inspiration of the devil. The struggle, upon the scientific theory, represents two elements in an evolution which can be accomplished peacefully by such a reconstruction as

will reconcile the conflicting aims and substitute harmony for discord. On the other doctrine, it is a conflict of hopelessly antagonistic principles, one of which is to be forcibly crushed.

I hope that I am not too sanguine, but I cannot help believing that in this respect we have improved, and improved by imbibing some of the scientific doctrine. I think that in recent discussions of the most important topics, however bitter and however much distorted by the old party spirit, there is yet a clearer recognition than of old, that widely-spread discontent is not a reason for arbitrary suppression, but for seeking to understand and remove its causes. We should act in the spirit of Spinoza's great saying; and it should be our aim, as it was his care, "neither to mock, to bewail, nor to denounce men's actions, but to understand them". That is equally true of men's opinions. If they are violent, passionate, subversive of all order, our duty is not bare denunciations, but a clear comprehension of the causes, not of the ostensible reasons, of their opinions, and a resolution to remove those causes. I think this view has made some way: I am sure that it will make more way if we become more scientific in spirit; and it is one of the main reasons for encouraging such a spirit. The most obvious difficulty just now is one upon which I must touch, though

with some fear and trembling. A terrible weapon has lately been coming into perfection, to which its inventors have given the elegant name of a "boom". The principle is—so far as I can understand—that the right frame of mind for dealing with the gravest problems is to generate a state of violent excitement, to adopt any remedy, real or supposed, which suggests itself at the moment, and to denounce everybody who suggests difficulties as a cynic or a cold-blooded egoist; and therefore to treat grave chronic and organic diseases of society by spasmodic impulses, to make stringent laws without condescending to ask whether they will work, and try the boldest experiments without considering whether they are likely to increase or diminish the evil. This, as some people think, is one of the inevitable consequences of democracy. I hope that it is not; but if it is, it is one of the inevitable consequences against which we, as cultivators of science, should most seriously protest, in the hope that we may some day find Philip sober enough to consider the consequences of his actions under the influence of spiritual intoxication. Professor Huxley, in one of those smart passages of arms which so forcibly illustrated his intellectual vigour, gave an apologue, which I wish that I could steal without acknowledgment. He spoke of an Irish carman who, on being told that he

was not going in the right direction, replied that he was at any rate going at a great pace. The scientific doctrine is simply that we should look at the map before we set out for Utopia; and I think that a doctrine which requires to be enforced by every means in our power.

This tendency, of course, comes out prominently in the important discussions of social and economic problems. That is a matter upon which I cannot now dwell, and which has been sufficiently emphasised by many eminent writers. If modern orators confined themselves to urging that the old economists exaggerated their claims to scientific accuracy, and were, in point of fact, guilty of many logical errors and hasty generalisations, I, at least, could fully agree with them. But the general impression seems to be, that because the old arguments were faulty, all argument is irrelevant: that because the alleged laws of nature were wrongly stated, there are no laws of nature at all; and that we may proceed to rearrange society, to fix the rate of wages or the rent of land or the incomes of capitalists without any reference at all to the conditions under which social arrangements have been worked out and actually carried on. This is, in short, to sanction the most obvious weakness of popular movements, and to assure the ignorant and thought-

less that they are above reason, and their crude guesses infallible guides to truth.

One view which tries to give some plausibility to these assumptions is summed up in the now current phrase about the "masses" and the "classes". We all know the regular process of logical fence of the journalist, *i.e.*, thrust and parry, which is repeated whenever such questions turn up. The Radical calls his opponent Tory and reactionary. The wicked Tory, it is said, thinks only of the class interest; believes that the nation exists for the sake of the House of Lords; lives in a little citadel provided with all the good things, which he is ready to defend against every attempt at a juster distribution; selfishness is his one motive; repression by brute force his only theory of government; and his views of life in general are those of the wicked cynics who gaze from their windows in Pall Mall. Then we have the roll of all the abuses which have been defended by this miscreant and his like since the days of George III.—slavery and capital punishment, and pensions and sinecures, and protection and the church establishment. The popular instinct, it is urged, has been in the right in so many cases that there is an enormous presumption in favour of the infallibility of all its instincts. The reply, of course, is equally obvious. Your boast, says the

Conservative, that you please the masses, is in effect a confession that you truckle to the mob. You mean that your doctrines spread in proportion to the ignorance of your constituents. You prove the merits of your theories by showing that they disgust people the more they think. The Liberalism of a district, it has been argued, varies with the number of convictions for drunkenness. If it be easy to denounce our ancestors, it is also easy to show how they built up the great empire which now shelters us; and how, if they had truckled, as you would have us truckle, to popular whims, we should have been deprived of our commerce, our manufactures, and our position in the civilised world. And then it is easy to produce a list of all the base demagogues who have misled popular impatience and ignorance from the days of Cleon to those of the French Convention, or of the last disreputable "boss" bloated with corruption and the plunder of some great American city. This is the result, it is suggested, of pandering to the mob, and generally ostracising the intelligent citizen.

I merely sketch the familiar arguments which any journalist has ready at hand, and, by a sufficient spice of references to actual affairs, can work up into any number of pointed leading articles. I will only observe that such arguments seem to me to illus-

trate that curious unreality of political theories of which I have spoken. It seems to be tacitly assumed on both sides, that votes are determined by a process of genuine reasoning. One side may be ignorant and the other prejudiced; but the arguments I have recapitulated seem to imply the assumption that the constituents really reflect upon the reasons for and against the measures proposed, and make up their minds accordingly. They are spoken of as though they were a body of experts, investigating a scientific doctrine, or at least a jury guided by the evidence laid before them. Upon that assumption, as it seems to me, the moral would be that the whole system is a palpable absurdity. The vast majority of voters scarcely think at all, and would be incapable of judging if they did. Hundreds of thousands care more for Dr. Grace's last score or the winner of the Derby than for any political question whatever. If they have opinions, they have neither the training nor the knowledge necessary to form any conclusion whatever. Consider the state of mind of the average voter—of nine men out of ten, say, whom you meet in the Strand. Ask yourselves honestly what value you would attach to his opinion upon any great question—say, of foreign politics or political economy. Has he ever really thought about them? Is he superficially acquainted with

any of the relevant facts? Is he even capable of the imaginative effort necessary to set before him the vast interests often affected? And would the simple fact that he said "Yes" to a given question establish in your mind the smallest presumption against the probability that the right answer would be "No"? What are the chances that a majority of people, of whom not one in a hundred has any qualifications for judging, will give a right judgment? Yet that is the test suggested by most of the conventional arguments on both sides; for I do not say this as intending to accept the anti-democratic application. It is just as applicable, I believe, to the educated and the well-off. I need not labour the point, which is sufficiently obvious. I am quite convinced that, for example, the voters for a university will be guided by unreasonable prejudices as the voters for a metropolitan constituency. In some ways they will be worse. To find people who believe honestly in antiquated prejudices, you must go to the people who have been trained to believe them. An ecclesiastical seminary can manage to drill the pupils into professing absurdities from which average common sense would shrink, and only supply logical machinery for warring against reason. The reference to enlightened aristocracies is common enough; but I cannot discover that,

"taken in a lump," any particular aristocracy cannot be as narrow-minded, short-sighted, and selfish, as the most rampant democracy. In point of fact, we all know that political action is determined by instinct rather than by reason. I do not mean that instinct is opposed to reason: it is simply a crude, undeveloped, inarticulate form of reason; it is blended with prejudices for which no reason is assigned, or even regarded as requisite. Such blind instincts, implying at most a kind of groping after error, necessarily govern the majority of men of all classes, in political as in other movements. The old apologists used to argue on the hypothesis that men must have accepted Christianity on the strength of a serious inquiry into the evidences. The fallacy of the doctrine is sufficiently plain: they accepted it because it suited them on the whole, and was fitted, no doubt, to their intellectual needs, but was also fitted to their emotional and moral needs as developed under certain social conditions. The inference from the general acceptance of any theory is not that it is true, but that it is true enough to satisfy the very feeble demand for logic—that it is not palpably absurd or self-contradictory; and that, for some reason or other, it satisfies also the imagination, the affections, and the aspirations of the believers. Not to go into other questions, this

single remark indicates, I think, the attitude which the scientific observer would adopt in regard to this ancient controversy. He would study the causes as well as the alleged reasons assignable for any general instinct, and admit that its existence is one of the primary data which have to be taken into account. To denounce democracy or aristocracy is easy enough; and it saves trouble to assume that God is on one side and the devil on the other. The true method, I take it, is that which was indicated by Tocqueville's great book upon democracy in America; a book which, if I may trust my own impressions, though necessarily imperfect as regards America, is a perfectly admirable example of the fruitful method of studying such problems. Though an aristocrat by birth and breeding, Tocqueville had the wisdom to examine democratic beliefs and institutions in a thoroughly impartial spirit; and, instead of simply denouncing or admiring, to trace the genesis of the prevalent ideas and their close connection with the general state of social development. An inquiry conducted in that spirit would not lead to the absolute dogmatic conclusions in which the superficial controversialist delights. It would show, perhaps, that there was at least this much truth in the democratic contention, that the masses are, by their position, exempt from some of the prejudices which

are ingrained in the members of a smaller caste; that they are therefore more accessible to certain moral considerations, and more anxious to promote the greatest happiness of the greater number. But it might also show how the weakness of the ignorant and untrained mind produces the characteristic evils of sentimentalism and impatience, of a belief in the omnipotence of legislation, and an excessive jealousy of all superiorities; and might possibly, too, exhibit certain merits which are impressed upon the aristocrat by his sense of the obligations of nobility. I do not in the least mean to express any opinion about such questions; I desire only to indicate the temper in which I conceive that they should be approached.

I have lived long enough to be utterly unable to believe—though some older politicians than I seem still to believe, especially on the eve of a dissolution—that any of our party lines coincide with the lines between good and bad, wise and foolish. Every one, of course, will repudiate the abstract theory. Yet we may notice how constantly it is assumed; and can see to what fallacies it leads when we look for a moment at the historical questions which no longer unite party feeling. Few, indeed, even of our historians, can write without taking party views of such questions. Even the candid and impartial seem to deserve these epithets chiefly because they want

imagination, and can cast blame or applaud alternately, because they do not enter into the real spirit of either party. Their views are sometimes a medley of inconsistent theories, rather than a deeper view which might reconcile apparent inconsistencies. I will only mention one point which often strikes me, and may lead to a relevant remark. Every royalist historian, we all know, labours to prove that Charles I. was a saint, and Cromwell a hypocrite. The view was natural at the time of the civil wars; but it now should suggest an obvious logical dilemma. If the monarchical theory which Charles represented was sound, and Charles was also a wise and good man, what caused the rebellion? A perfect man driving a perfect engine should surely not have run it off the rails. The royalist ought to seek to prove that Charles was a fool and a knave, to account for the collapse of royalty; and the case against royalty is all the stronger, if you could show that Charles, in spite of impeccable virtue, was forced by his position to end on the scaffold. Choose between him and the system which he applied. So Catholics and conservatives are never tired of denouncing Henry VIII. and the French revolutionists. So far as I can guess (I know very little about it), their case is a very strong one. I somehow believe, in spite of Froude, that Henry VIII. was a tyrant; and eulogies upon

the reign of terror generally convince me that a greater set of scoundrels seldom came to the surface, than the perpetrators of those enormities. But then the real inference is, to my mind, very different. Henry VIII. was the product of the previous time; the ultimate outcome of that ideal state of things in which the church had its own way during the ages of truth. Must not the system have been wrong, when it had so lost all moral weight as to be at the mercy of a ruffianly plunderer? And so, as we all admit now, the strongest condemnation of the old French *régime* is the fact that it had not only produced such a set of miscreants as those who have cast permanent odium even upon sound principles; but that its king and rulers went down before them without even an attempt at manly resistance. A revolution does not, perhaps, justify itself; it does not prove that its leaders judged rightly and acted virtuously: but, beyond a doubt, it condemns the previous order which brought it about. What a horrid thing is the explosion! Why, is the obvious answer, did you allow the explosive materials to accumulate, till the first match must fire the train? The greatest blot upon Burke, I need hardly say, is that his passions blinded him in his age, to this, as we now see, inevitable conclusion.

The old-fashioned view, I fancy, is a relic of that

view of history in which all the great events and changes were personified in some individual hero. The old "legislators," Lycurgus and Solon and the like, were supposed to have created the institutions which were really the products of a slow growth. When a favourable change due to economical causes took place in the position of the French peasantry, the peasants, says Michelet somewhere, called it "good king Henry". Carlyle's theory of hero worship is partly an application of the same mode of thought. You embody your principle in some concrete person; canonise him or damn him, as he represents truth or error; and take credit to yourself for insight and for a lofty morality. It becomes a kind of blasphemy to suggest that your great man, who thus stands for an inspired leader dropped straight out of heaven, was probably at best very imperfect, one-sided, and at least as much of a product as a producer. The crudity of the method is even regarded as a proof of its morality. Your common-place moralist likes to call everything black or white; he despises all qualifications as casuistical refinements, and plumes himself on the decisive verdict, saint or sinner, with which he labels the adherents and opponents of his party. And yet we know as a fact, how absurd are such judgments. We know how men are betrayed into bad causes from good motives, or put on the right side because

it happens to harmonise with their lower interests. Saints—so we are told—have been the cruellest persecutors; and kings, acting from purely selfish ambition, have consolidated nations or crushed effete and mischievous institutions. If we can make up our minds as to which was, on the whole, the best cause,—and, generally speaking, both sides represented some sound principle,—it does not follow that it was also the cause of all the best men. Before we can judge of the individual, we must answer a hundred difficult questions: If he took the right side, did he take it from the right motives? Was it from personal ambition or pure patriotism? Did he see what was the real question at issue? Did he foresee the inevitable effect of the measures which he advocated? If he did not see, was it because he was human, and therefore short-sighted; or because he was brutal, and therefore wanting in sympathy; or because he had intellectual defects, which made it impossible for him to escape from the common illusions of the time? These, and any number of similar difficulties, arise when we try to judge of the great men who form landmarks in our history, from the time of Boadicea to that of Queen Victoria. They are always amusing, and sometimes important; but there is always a danger that they may warp our views of the vital facts. The beauty of Mary Queen

of Scots still disqualifies many people from judging calmly the great issues of a most important historical epoch. I will leave it to you to apply this to our views of modern politics, and judge the value of the ordinary assumption which assumes that all good men must be on one side.

Now we may say that the remedy for such illusions points to the importance of a doctrine which is by no means new, but which has, I think, bearings not always recognised. We have been told, again and again, since Plato wrote his *Republic*, that society is an organism. It is replied that this is at best an analogy upon which too great stress must not be laid; and we are warned against the fanciful comparisons which some writers have drawn between the body corporate and the actual physical body, with its cells, tissues, nervous system, and so forth. Now, whatever may be the danger of that mode of reasoning, I think that the statement, properly understood, corresponds to a simple logical canon too often neglected in historical and political reasonings. It means, I take it, in the first place, that every man is a product as well as a producer; that there is no such thing as the imaginary individual with fixed properties, whom theorists are apt to take for granted as the base of their reasoning; that no man or group of men is intelligible without taking

into account the mass of instincts transmitted through their predecessors, and therefore without referring to their position in the general history of human development. And, secondly, it is essential to remember in speaking of any great man, or of any institution, their position as parts of a complicated system of actions and emotions. The word "if," I may say, changes its meaning. "If" Harold had won the battle of Hastings, what would have been the result? The answer would be comparatively simple, if we could, in the old fashion, attribute to William the Conqueror all the results in which he played a conspicuous part: if, therefore, we could make out a definite list of effects of which he was the cause, and, by simply "deducting" them, after Coleridge's fashion, from the effects which actually followed, determine what was the precise balance. But when we consider how many causes were actually in operation, how impossible it is to disentangle and separate them, and say this followed from that, and that other from something else, we have to admit that the might have been is simply undiscoverable. The great man may have hastened what was otherwise inevitable; he may simply have supplied the particular point, round which a crystallisation took place of forces which would have otherwise discovered some other centre; and the fact

that he succeeded in establishing certain institutions or laws may be simply a proof that he saw a little more clearly than others the direction towards which more general causes were inevitably propelling the nation. Briefly, we cannot isolate the particular "cause" in this case, and have to remember at every moment that it was only one factor in a vast and complex series of changes, which would no doubt have taken a different turn without it, but of which it may be indefinitely difficult to say what was the precise deflection due to its action.

In trying to indicate the importance, I have had to dwell upon the difficulty, of applying anything like scientific methods to political problems. I shall conclude by trying once more to indicate why, in spite of this, I hold that the attempt is desirable, and may be fruitful.

People sometimes say that scientific methods are inapplicable because we cannot try experiments in social matters. I remember being long ago struck by a remark of Dr. Arnold, which has some bearing upon this assertion. He observed upon the great advantage possessed by Aristotle in the vast number of little republics in his time, each of which was virtually an experiment in politics. I always thought that this was fallacious somehow, and I fancy that it is not hard to indicate the general nature of the

fallacy. Freeman, upon whose services to thorough and accurate study of history I am unworthy to pronounce an eulogy, fell into the same fallacy, I fancy, when he undertook to write a history of Federal Governments. He fancied that because the Achæan League and the Swiss Cantons and the United States of America all had this point in common, and that they represented the combinations of partially independent States, their history would be in a sense continuous. The obvious consideration that the federations differed in every possible way, in their religions and state of civilisation and whole social structure, might be neglected. Freeman's tendency to be indifferent to everything which was not in the narrowest sense political led him to this—as it seems to me—pedantic conception. If the prosperity of a nation depended exclusively upon the form of its government, Aristotle, as Arnold remarks, would have had before him a greater number of experiments than the modern observer. But the assumption is obviously wrong. Every one of these ancient States depended for its prosperity upon a vast number of conditions—its race, its geographical position, its stage of development, and so forth, quite impossible to tabulate or analyse; and the form of government which suited one would be entirely inapplicable to another. To extricate from all these

conflicting elements the precise influence due to any institutions would be a task beyond the powers of any number of philosophers; and indeed the perplexity would probably be increased by the very number of experiments. To make an experiment fruitful, it is necessary to eliminate all the irrelevant elements which intrude into the concrete cases spontaneously offered by nature, and, for example, to obtain two cases differing only in one element, to which we may therefore plausibly attribute other contrasts. Now, the history of a hundred or a thousand small States would probably only present the introduction of new and perplexing elements for every new case. The influence, again, of individuals, or accident of war, or natural catastrophes, is greater in proportion as the State is smaller, and therefore makes it more difficult to observe the permanent and underlying influences. It seems to me, therefore, that the study, say of English history, where we have a continuous growth over many centuries, where the disturbing influences of individuals or chance are in a greater degree cancelled by the general tendencies working beneath them, we have really a far more instructive field for political observation. This may help us to see what are the kinds of results which may be anticipated from sociological study undertaken in a serious spirit. The

growth, for example, of the industrial system of England is a profoundly interesting subject of inquiry, to which we are even now only beginning to do justice. Historians have admitted, even from the time of Hume, that the ideal history should give less of mere battles and intrigues, and more account of those deeper and more continuous processes which lie, so to speak, beneath the surface. They have hardly, I think, even yet realised the full bearing and importance of this observation. Yet, of late, much has been done, though much still remains to do, in the way of a truly scientific study of the development of institutions, political, ecclesiastical, industrial, and so forth, of this and other countries. As this tendency grows, we may hope gradually to have a genuine history of the English people; an account—not of the virtues and vices of Mary Queen of Scots, or arguments as to the propriety of cutting off Charles I.'s head—but a trustworthy account of the way in which the actual structure of modern society has been developed out of its simpler germs. The biographies of great kings and generals, and so forth, will always be interesting; but to the genuine historian of the future they will be interesting not so much as giving room for psychological analyses or for dramatic portraits, but as indications of the great social forces which produced them, and the direction

of which at the moment may be illustrated by their cases. I have spoken of the history of our industrial system. To know what was the position of the English labourer at various times, how it was affected by the political changes or by the great mechanical discoveries, to observe what grievances arose, what remedies were applied or sought to be applied, and with what result,—to treat all this with due reference to the whole social and intellectual evolution of which it formed a part, may well call forth the powers of our acutest and most thoroughgoing inquirers, and will, when it is done, give essential data for some of the most vitally important problems of the day. This is what I understand by an application of the scientific spirit to social and political problems. We cannot try experiments, it is said, in historical questions. We cannot help always trying experiments, and experiments of vast importance. Every man has to try an experiment upon himself when he chooses his career; and the results are frequently very unpleasant, though very instructive. We have to be our own experiments. Every man who sets up in business tries an experiment, ending in fortune or in bankruptcy. Every strike is an experiment, and generally a costly one. Every attempt at starting a new charitable organisation, or a new system of

socialism or co-operation, is an experiment. Every new law is an experiment, rash or otherwise. And from all these experiments we do at least collect a certain number of general observations, which, though generally consigned to copybooks, are not without value. What is true, however, is that we cannot try such experiments as a man of science can sometimes try in his laboratory, where he can select and isolate the necessary elements in any given process, and decide, by subjecting them to proper conditions, how a definite question is to be answered. Our first experiments are all in the rough, so to speak, tried at haphazard, and each involving an indefinite number of irrelevant conditions. But there is a partial compensation. We cannot tabulate the countless experiments which have been tried with all their distracting varieties. Yet in a certain sense the answer is given for us. For the social structure at any period is in fact the net product of all the experiments that have been made by the individuals of which it is and has been composed. Therefore, so far as we can obtain some general views of the successive changes in social order which have been gradually and steadily developing themselves throughout the more noisy and conspicuous but comparatively superficial political disturbances, we can detect the true meaning of some general phenomena

in which the actors themselves were unconscious of the determining causes. We can see more or less what were the general causes which have led to various forms of associations, to the old guilds, or the modern factory system, to the trades unions or the co-operative societies; and correcting and verifying our general results by a careful examination of the particular instances, approximate, vaguely it may be and distantly, to some such conception of the laws of development of different social tissues as, if not properly scientific, may yet belong to the scientific order of thought. Thus, when distracted by this or that particular demand, by promises of the millennium to be inaugurated to-morrow by an Act of Parliament, or threats of some social cataclysm to overwhelm us if we concede an inch to wicked agitators, we may succeed in placing ourselves at a higher point of view, from which it is possible to look over wider horizons, to regard what is happening to-day in its relations to slow processes of elaboration, and to form judgments based upon wide and systematic inquiry, which, if they do not entitle us to predict particular events, as an astronomer predicts an eclipse, will at least be a guide to sane and sober minds, and suggest at once a humbler appreciation of what is within our power, and—I think also—a more really hopeful anticipation of genuine progress in the future.

All scientific inquiry is an interrogation of nature. We have, in Bacon's grand sententious phrase, to command nature by obeying. We learn what are the laws of social growth by living them. The great difficulty of the interrogation is to know what questions we are to put. Under the guidance of metaphysicians, we have too often asked questions to which no answer is conceivable, like children, who in first trying to think, ask, why are we living in the nineteenth century, why is England an island, or why does pain hurt, or why do two and two make four? The only answer is by giving the same facts in a different set of words, and that is a kind of answer to which metaphysical dexterity sometimes gives an air of plausibility. More frequently our ingenuity takes the form of sanctioning preconceived prejudices, by wrapping up our conclusion in our premisses, and then bringing it out triumphantly with the air of a rigorous deduction. The progress of social science implies, in the first place, the abandonment of the weary system of hunting for fruitful truths in the region of chimeras, and trying to make empty logical concepts do the work of observation of facts. It involves, again, a clear perception of the kind of questions which can be profitably asked, and the limits within which an answer, not of the illusory kind, can really be expected. And then we may

come to see that, without knowing it, we have really been trying a vast and continuous experiment, since the race first began to be human. We have, blindly and unconsciously, constructed a huge organism which does, somehow or other, provide a great many millions of people with a tolerable amount of food and comfort. We have accomplished this, I say, unconsciously; for each man, limited to his own little sphere, and limited to his own interests, and guided by his own prejudices and passions, has been as ignorant of more general tendencies as the coral insect of the reef which it has helped to build. To become distinctly conscious of what it is that we have all been doing all this time, is one step in advance. We have obeyed in ignorance; and as obedience becomes conscious, we may hope, within certain narrow limits, to command, or, at least, to direct. An enlarged perception of what have been the previous results may enable us to see what results are possible, and among them to select what may be worthy ends. It is not to be supposed that we shall ever get beyond the need of constant and careful experiment. But, in proportion as we can cultivate the right frame of mind, as each member of society requires wider sympathies and a larger horizon, it is permissible to hope that the experiments may become more intelligent; that we shall

not, as has so often been done, increase poverty by the very remedies which are intended to remove it, or diverge from the path of steady progressive development, into the chase of some wild chimera, which requires for its achievement only the radical alteration of all the data of experience. "Annihilate space and time, and make two lovers happy," was the modest petition of an enthusiast; and he would probably have been ready to join in the prayer, "make all men angels, and then we shall have a model society". Although in saying this my immediate moral is to preach sobriety, I do not intend to denounce enthusiasm, but to urge a necessity of organising enthusiasm. I only recommend people not to venture upon flying machines before they have studied the laws of mechanics; but I earnestly hope that some day we may be able to call a balloon as we now call a cab. To point out the method, and to admit that it is not laborious, is not to discourage aspiration, but to look facts in the face: not to preach abandonment of enthusiasm, but to urge that enthusiasm should be systematic, should lead men to study the conditions of success, and to make a bridge before they leap the gulf.

THE SPHERE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY.

THERE seem to be at present many conflicting views as to the nature of Political Economy. There is a popular impression that Political Economy, or, at any rate, the so-called "classical" doctrine, the doctrine which was made most definite by Ricardo, and accepted with modifications by J. S. Mill, is altogether exploded. Their main doctrines, it is suggested, were little better than mares' nests, and we may set aside their pretensions to have founded an exact science. What, then, is to come in its place? Are we simply to admit that there is no certainty about economical problems, and to fall back upon mere empiricism? Everything,—shall we say?—is to be regarded as an open question. That is, perhaps, a common impression in the popular mind. Yet, on the other hand, we may find some very able thinkers applying mathematical formulæ to economics; and that seems to suppose, that within a certain region they obtain results comparable in precision and accuracy to those of the great physical sciences. The topic is a very wide one; and it would

be presumptuous in me to speak dogmatically. I wish, however, to suggest certain considerations which may, perhaps, be worth taking into account; and, as I must speak briefly, I must not attempt to supply all the necessary qualifications. I can only attempt to indicate what seems to me to be the correct point of view, and apologise if I appear to speak too dogmatically, simply because I cannot waste time by expressions of diffidence, by reference to probable criticisms, or even by a full statement of my own reasons.

A full exposition would have to define the sphere of Political Economy by describing its data and its methods. What do we assume, and how do we reason? A complete answer to these questions would indicate the limits within which we can hope for valid conclusions. I will first refer, briefly, to a common statement of one theory advocated by the old-fashioned or classical school. Economic doctrine, they have said, supposes a certain process of abstraction. We have to do with what has been called the "economic man". He is not, happily, the real man. He is an imaginary being, whose sole principle of action is to buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest market: a man, more briefly, who always prefers a guinea—even a dirty guinea—to a pound of the cleanest. Economists reply to the remonstrances of

those who deny the existence of such a monster, by adding that they do not for a moment suppose that men in general, or even tradesmen or stockbrokers, are in reality such beings,—mere money-making machines, stripped bare of all generous or altruistic sentiment—but simply that, as a matter of fact, most people do, *ceteris paribus*, prefer a guinea to a pound; and that so large a part of our industrial activity is carried on from motives of this kind, that we may obtain a fair approximation to the actual course of affairs by considering them as the sole motives. We shall not go wrong, for example, in financial questions, by assuming that the sole motive of speculators in the Stock Exchange is the desire to make money. Now, it is possible, perhaps, to justify this way of putting the case, by certain qualifications. I think, however, that, if strictly interpreted, it is apt to cover a serious fallacy. The "economic man" theory, we may say, assumes too much in one direction, and too little in another. It assumes too much if it is understood as implying that the desire for wealth is a purely selfish desire. A man may desire to make money in order simply to gratify his own sensual appetites. But he may also desire to be independent; and that may include a desire to do his part in the work of society, and probably does include some desire to relieve others of a burden. The wish

to be self-supporting is not necessarily or purely "selfish". And obviously, too, one great motive in all such occupations is the desire to support a family, and one main inducement to saving is the desire to support it after your own death. Remove such motives, and half the impulses to regular industrial energy of all kinds would be destroyed. We must, therefore, give our "economic man" credit for motives referring to many interests besides those which he buttons into his own waistcoat. And therefore, too, as I have said, the assumption is insufficient. The very conception of economic science supposes all that is supposed, in the growth of a settled order of society. The purest type of the "economic man," as he is sometimes described, would be realised in the lowest savage, as sometimes described, who is absolutely selfish, who knocks his child on the head because it cries, and eats his aged parent if he cannot find a supply of roots. But such a being could only form herds, not societies. Political Economy only becomes conceivable when we suppose certain institutions to have been developed. It assumes, obviously, and in the first place, the institution of property; it becomes applicable, with less qualification, in proportion to the growth of the corresponding sentiments; it takes for granted all that highly elaborate set of instincts which induce me,

when I want something, to produce an equivalent in exchange for it, instead of going out to take it by force. The more thorough the respect for property, the more applicable are rules of economics; and that respect implies a long training in that sense of other people's rights, which, unfortunately, is by no means so perfect as might be desired.

It follows, then, that the economist really assumes more—and rightly assumes more—than he sometimes claims. He assumes what Adam Smith assumed at the opening of his great treatise: that is, the division of labour. But the division of labour implies the organisation of society. It implies that one man is growing corn while another is digging gold, because each is confident that he will be able to exchange the products of his own labour for the products of the other man's labour. This, of course, implies settled order, respect for contracts, the preservation of peace, and the abolition of force throughout the area occupied by the society. And this, again, is only possible in so far as certain political and ecclesiastical and military institutions have been definitely constructed. The economic assumption is really an assumption—not of a certain psychological condition of the average man, but—of the existence of a certain social mechanism. A complete science would clear up fully a problem

which must occur often to all of us: How do you account for London? How is it that four or five millions of people manage to subsist on an area of a few square miles, which itself produces nothing? that other millions all over the world are engaged in providing for their wants? that food and clothes and fuel, in sufficient quantities to preserve life, are being distributed with tolerable regularity to each unit in this vast and apparently chaotic crowd? and that, somehow or other, we struggle on, well or ill, by the help of a gigantic commissariat, performing functions incomparably more complex than were ever needed for military purposes? The answer supposes that there is, as a matter of fact, a great industrial organisation which discharges the various functions of producing, exchanging, distributing, and so forth; and that its mutual relations are just as capable of being investigated and stated as the relations between different parts of an army. The men and officers do not wear uniforms; they are not explicitly drilled or subject to a definite code of discipline; and their rates of pay are not settled by any central authority. But there are capitalists, "undertakers" and labourers, merchants and retail dealers and contractors, and so forth, just as certainly as there are generals and privates, horse, foot, and artillery; and their mutual relations are equally definable. The

economist has to explain the working of this industrial mechanism; and the thought may sometimes occur to us, that it is strange that he should find the task so difficult. Since we ourselves have made, or at any rate constitute, the mechanism, why should it be so puzzling to find out what it is? We are co-operating in a systematic production and distribution of wealth, and we surely ought not to find any impenetrable mystery in discovering what it is that we are doing every day of our lives. Certain economists writing within this century have often been credited with the discovery of the true theory of rent, or, which is equally good for my purpose, of starting a false theory. Yet landowners and agents had been letting farms and houses for generations; and surely they ought to have known what it was that they were themselves doing. One explanation of the difficulty is, that whereas an army is constituted by certain regulations of a central authority, the industrial army has grown up unconsciously and spontaneously. Its multitudinous members have only looked each at his own little circle; the labourer only thinks of his wages, and the capitalist of his profits, without considering his relations to the whole system of which he forms a part. The peasant drives his plough for wages, and buys his tea as if the tea fell like manna from the skies, with-

out thinking of the curious relation into which he is thus brought with the natives of another hemisphere. The order which results from all these independent activities appeared to the older economists as an illustration of the doctrine of Final Causes. Providence had so ordered things that each man, by pursuing his own interests, pursued the interests of all. To a later school it appears rather as an illustration of the doctrine by which organisms are constructed through the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest. In either case, it seems as though the mechanism were made rather for us than by us; that it is the product of conditions which we cannot control, instead of being an arrangement put together by conscious volitions. And, therefore, when the economist shows us what in fact are the existing arrangements and their mutual relations, he appears to be making a discovery of a scientific fact as much as if he were describing the anatomy of some newly-discovered animal or plant.

The real assumption of the economist therefore is, as I think, simply the existence of a certain industrial organisation, which has a real existence as much as an army or a church; and there is no reason why his description should not be as accurate as the complexity of the facts allows. He is giving us the anatomy of society considered as a huge mechanism

for producing and distributing wealth, and he makes an abstraction only in the sense that he is considering one set of facts at a time. The military writer would describe the constitution of an army without going into the psychological or political conditions which are of course implied, and without considering the soldiers in any other relations than those implied in their military services. In the same way, the economist describes the army of industry, and classifies its constituent parts. In order to explain their mutual relations, he has to make certain further assumptions, of which it would be rash to attempt a precise summary. He assumes as a fact, what has of course always been known, that scarcity implies dearth and plenty cheapness; that commodities flow to the markets where they will fetch the highest prices; that there is a certain gravitation towards equalisation of profits among capitalists, and of wages among labourers; so that capital or labour will flow towards the employments in which they will secure the highest reward. He endeavours to give the greatest accuracy to such formulæ, of which nobody, so far as I know, denies a certain approximate truth. So long as they hold good, his inferences, if logically drawn, will also hold good. They take for granted certain psychological facts, such as are implied in all statements about human

nature. But the economist, as an economist, is content to take them for granted without investigating the ultimate psychological laws upon which they depend. Those laws, or rather their results, are a part of his primary data, although he may go so far into psychological problems as to try to state them more accurately. The selfishness or unselfishness of the economic man has to be considered by the psychologist or by the moralist; but the economist has only to consider their conclusions so far as they affect the facts. So long as it is true, for example, that scarcity causes dearness, that profits attract capital, that demand and supply tend to equalise each other, and so forth, his reasonings are justified; and the further questions of the ethical and psychological implications of these facts must be treated by a different science. The question of the play of economic forces thus generally reduces itself to a problem which may be thus stated: What are the conditions of industrial equilibrium? How must prices, rates of wages, and profit be related in order that the various classes concerned may receive such proportions of produce as are compatible with the maintenance of the existing system of organisation? If any specified change occurs, if production becomes easier or more difficult, if a tax be imposed, or a regulation of any kind affects previous conditions,

what changes will be necessary to restore the equilibrium? These are the main problems of Political Economy. To solve, or attempt to solve them, we have to describe accurately the existing mechanism, and to suppose that it will regulate itself on the assumption which I have indicated as to demand and supply, the flow of capital and labour, and so forth. To go beyond these assumptions, and to justify them by psychological and other considerations, may be and is a most interesting task, but it takes us beyond the sphere of Economics proper.

I must here diverge for a little, to notice the view of the school of economists which seems to regard scientific accuracy as attainable by a different path. Jevons, its most distinguished leader in England, says roundly, that political science must be a "mathematical science," because "it deals throughout with quantities"; and we have been since provided with a number of formulæ, corresponding to this doctrine. The obvious general reply would be, that Political Economy cannot be an exact science because it also deals throughout with human desires. The objection is not simply that our data are too vague. That objection, as Jevons says, would, perhaps, apply to meteorology, of which nobody doubts that it is capable of being made an exact science. But why does nobody doubt that meteorology might

become an exact science? Because we are convinced that all the data which would be needed are expressible in precise terms of time and space; we have to do with volumes, and masses, and weights, and forces which can be exactly measured by lines; and, in short, with things which could be exactly measured and counted. The data are, at present, insufficiently known, and possibly the problems which would result might be too complex for our powers of calculation. Still, if we could once get the data, we could express all relevant considerations by precise figures and numbers.

Now, is this true of economic science? Within certain limits, it is apparently true: Ricardo used mathematical formulæ, though he kept to arithmetic, instead of algebra. When Malthus spoke of arithmetical and geometrical ratios, the statement, true or false, was, of course, capable of precise numerical expression, so soon as the ratios were assigned. So there was the famous formula proving a relation between the number of quarters of corn produced by a given harvest, and the number of shillings that would be given for a quarter of corn. If, again, we took the number of marriages corresponding to a given price of corn, we should obtain a formula connecting the number of marriages with the number of quarters of corn produced. The utility of statistics, of course,

depends upon the fact that we do empirically discover some tolerably constant and simple numerical formulæ. Such statistical statements are useful, indeed, not only in economical, but in other inquiries, which are clearly beyond the reach of mathematics. The proportion of criminals in a given population, the number of suicides, or of illegitimate births, may throw some light upon judicial and political, and even religious or ethical problems. Nor are such formulæ useless simply because empirical. The law of gravitation, for example, is empirical. Nobody knows the cause of the observed tendency of bodies to gravitate to each other, and therefore no one can say how far the law which represents the tendency must be universal. Still, the fact that, so far as we have observed, it is invariably verified, and that calculations founded upon it enable us to bring a vast variety of phenomena under a single rule, is quite enough to justify astronomical calculation.

If, therefore, we could find a mathematical formula which was, as a matter of fact, verifiable in economical problems about prices, and so forth, we should rightly apply to mathematicians to help us with their methods. But, not only do we not find any such simple relations, but we can see conclusive reasons for being sure that we can never find them. Take, for example, the case of the number of

marriages under given conditions. I need hardly say that it is impossible for the ablest mathematician to calculate whether the individual A will marry the individual B. But, by taking averages, and so eliminating individual eccentricities, he might discover that, in a given country and at a given time, a rise of prices will diminish marriages in certain proportion. Our knowledge of human nature is sufficient to make that highly probable. But our knowledge also shows that such a change will act differently in different cases: there will be one formula for France, and another for England; one for Lancashire, and another for Cornwall; one for the rich, and another for the poor; and both the total wealth of a country and its distribution will affect the rule. Differences of national temperament, of political and social constitution, of religion and ecclesiastical organisation, will all have an effect; and, therefore, a formula true here and now must, in all probability, fail altogether elsewhere. The formula is, in the mathematical phrase, a function of so many independent variables, that it must be complex beyond all conception, if it takes them all into account; while it must yet be necessarily inaccurate if it does not take them into account. But, besides this, the conditions upon which the law obviously depends are not themselves capable of being accurately defined, and still less of

being numerically stated. Ingenious thinkers have, indeed, tried to apply mathematical formulæ to psychology; but they have not got very far; and it may, I think, be assumed, without further argument, that while you have to deal both with psychological and sociological elements, with human desires, and with those desires modified by social relations, it is impossible to find any data which can be mathematically stated. There is no arithmetical measure of the forces of love, or hunger, or avarice, by which (among others) the whole problem is worked out.

It seems to me, therefore, that we must accept the alternative which is only mentioned to be repudiated by Jevons, namely, that Political Economy, if not a "mathematical science," must be part of sociology. I should say that it clearly is so; for if we wish to investigate the cause of any of the phenomena concerned, and not simply to tabulate from observations, we are at once concerned with the social structure and with the underlying psychology. The mathematical methods are quite in their place when dealing with statistics. The rise and fall of prices, and so forth, can be stated precisely in figures; and, whenever we can discover some approximation to a mathematical law (as in the cases I have noticed) we may work out the results. If, for example, the price of a commodity under

certain conditions bears a certain relation to its scarcity, we can discover the one fact when the other fact is given, remembering only that our conclusions are not more certain than our premisses, and that the observed law depends upon unknown and most imperfectly knowable conditions. Such results, again, may be very useful in various ways, as illustrative of the way in which certain laws will work if they hold good; and, again, as testing many of our general theories. If you have argued that the price of gold or silver cannot be fixed, the fact that it has been fixed under certain conditions will of course lead to a revision of your arguments. But I cannot help thinking that it is an illusion to suppose that such methods can justify the assertion that the science as a whole is "mathematical". Nothing, indeed, is easier than to speak as if you had got a mathematical theory. Let x mean the desire for marriage and y the fear of want, then the number of marriages is a function of x and y , and I can express this by symbols as well as by ordinary words. But there is no magic about the use of symbols. Mathematical inquiries are not fruitful because symbols are used, but because the symbols represent something absolutely precise and assignable. The highest mathematical inquiries are simply ingenious methods of counting; and till you have got something precise

to count, they can take you no further. I cannot help thinking that this fallacy imposes upon some modern reasoners; that they assume that they have got the data because they have put together the formulæ which would be useful if they had the data; and, in short, that you can get more out of a mill than you put into it; or, in other words, that more conclusions than really follow can be got out of premisses, simply because you show what would follow if you had the required knowledge. When the attempt is made, as it seems to me to be made sometimes, to deduce economical laws from some law of human desire—as from the simple theorem that equal increments of a commodity imply diminishing amounts of utility—I should reply not only that the numerical data are vaguely defined and incapable of being accurately stated, but that the attempt must be illusory because the conclusions are not determinable from the premisses. The economic laws do not follow from any simple rule about human desires, because they vary according to the varying constitution of human society; and any conclusion which you could obtain would be necessarily confined to the abstract man of whom the law is supposed to hold good. Every such method, therefore, if it could be successful, could only lead to conclusions about human desire in general, and could

throw no light upon the special problems of political economy, which essentially depend upon varying industrial organisation.

I will not, however, go further. You must either, I hold, limit Political Economy to the field of statistical inquiry, or admit that, as a part of sociology, it deals with questions altogether beyond the reach of mathematics. Like physiology, it is concerned with results capable of numerical statement. The number of beats of the pulse, or the number of degrees of temperature of the body, are important data in physiological problems. They may be counted, and may give rise to mathematically expressible formulæ. But the fact does not excuse us from considering the physical conditions of the organs which are in some way correlated with these observed phenomena; and, in the case of Political Economy, we have to do with the social structure, which is dependent upon forces altogether incapable of precise numerical estimates. That, at least, is my view; and I shall apply it to illustrate one remark, which must, I think, have often occurred to us. Political Economy, that is, often appears to have a negative rather than a positive value. It is exceedingly potent—so, at least, I think—in dispersing certain popular fallacies; but it fails when we regard it as a science which can give us positive concrete “laws”. The general reason

is, I should say, that although its first principles may be true descriptions of facts, and any denial of them, or any inconsistent applications of them, may lead us into error, they are yet far from sufficient descriptions. They omit some considerations which are relevant in any concrete case; and the facts which they describe are so complex that, even when we look at them consistently and follow the right clue, we cannot solve the complicated problems which occur. It may be worth while to insist a little upon this, and to apply it to one or two peculiar problems.

Let me start from the ordinary analogy. Economic inquiry, I have suggested, describes a certain existing mechanism, which exists as really as the physical structure described by an anatomist. The industrial organism has, of course, many properties of which the economist, as such, does not take account. The labourer has affections, and imaginations, and opinions outside of his occupation as labourer; he belongs to a state, a church, a family, and so forth, which affect his whole life, including his industrial life. Is it therefore impossible to consider the industrial organisation separately? Not more impossible, I should reply, than to apply the same method in regard to the individual body. Were I to regard my stomach simply as a bag into which I put

my food, I should learn very little about the process of digestion. Still, it is such a bag, and it is important to know where it is, and what are its purely mechanical relations to other parts of the body. My arms and legs are levers, and I can calculate the pressure necessary to support a weight on the hand, as though my bones and muscles were made of iron and whipcord. I am a piece of mechanism, though I am more, and all the principles of simple mechanics apply to my actions, though they do not, by themselves, suffice to explain the actions. The discovery of the circulation of the blood explained, as I understand, my structure as a hydraulic apparatus; and it was of vast importance, even though it told us nothing directly of the other processes necessarily involved. In this case, therefore, we have an instance of the way in which a set of perfectly true propositions may, so to speak, be imbedded in a larger theory, and may be of the highest importance, though they are not by themselves sufficient to solve any concrete problem. We cannot, that is, deduce the physiological principles from the mechanical principles, although they are throughout implied. But those principles are not the less true and useful in the detection of fallacies. They may enable us to show that an argument supposes facts which do not exist; or, perhaps, that it is, at any rate, inconsistent

because it assumes one structure in its premisses, and another in its conclusions.

I state this by way of illustration: but the value of the remark may be best tested by applying it to some economical doctrines. Let us take, for example, the famous argument of Adam Smith against what he called the mercantile theory. That theory, according to him, supposed that the wealth of nations, like the wealth of an individual, was in proportion to the amount of money in their possession. He insisted upon the theory that money, as it is useful solely for exchange, cannot be, in itself, wealth; that its absolute amount is a matter of indifference, because if every coin in existence were halved or doubled, it would discharge precisely the same function; and he inferred that the doctrine which tested the advantages of foreign commerce by the balance of trade or the net return of money, was altogether illusory. His theory is expounded in every elementary treatise on the subject. It may be urged that it was a mere truism, and therefore useless; or, again, that it does not enable us to deduce a complete theory of the functions of money. In regard to the first statement, I should reply that, although Smith probably misrepresented some of his antagonists, the fallacy which he exposed was not only current at the time, but is still constantly cropping up in modern

controversies. So long as arguments are put forward which implicitly involve an erroneous, because self-contradictory, conception of the true functions of money, it is essential to keep in mind these first principles, however obvious they may be in an abstract statement. Euclid's axioms are useful because they are self-evident; and so long as people make mistakes in geometry, it will be necessary to expose their blundering by bringing out the contradictions involved. As Hobbes observed, people would dispute even geometrical axioms if they had an interest in doing so; and, certainly, they are ready to dispute the plainest doctrines about money. The other remark, that we cannot deduce a complete theory from the axiom is, of course, true. Thus, for example, although the doctrine may be unimpeachable, there is a difficulty in applying it to the facts. As gold has other uses besides its use as money, its value is not regulated exclusively by the principle assigned; as other things, again, such as bank-notes and cheques, discharge some of the functions of money, we have all manner of difficult problems as to what money precisely is, and how the most elementary principles will apply to the concrete facts. A very shrewd economist once remarked, listening to a metaphysical argument, "If there had been any money to be made out of it, we should have solved

that question in the city long ago". Yet, there is surely money to be made out of a correct theory of the currency; and people in the city do not seem to have arrived at a complete agreement. In fact, such controversies illustrate the extreme difficulty which arises out of the complexity of the phenomena, even where the economic assumption of the action of purely money-loving activity is most nearly verified. The moral is, I fancy, that while inaccurate conclusions are extremely difficult, we can only hope to approach them by a firm grasp of the first principles revealed in the simplest cases.

Even in such a case, we have also to notice how we have to make allowance for the intrusion of other than purely economic cases. The doctrine just noticed is, of course, closely connected with the theory of free trade. The free trade argument is, I should mention, perfectly conclusive in a negative sense. It demonstrates, that is, the fallacy which lurks in the popular argument for protection. That argument belongs to the commonest class of economic fallacies, which consists in looking at one particular result without considering the necessary implications. The great advantage of any rational theory is, that it forces us to look upon the industrial mechanism as a whole, and to trace out the correlative changes involved in any particular operation. It

disposes of the theories which virtually propose to improve our supply of water by pouring a cup out of one vessel into another; and such theories have had considerable success in economy. So far, in short, as a protectionist really maintains that the advantage consists in accumulating money, without asking what will be the effect upon the value of money, or that it consists in telling people to make for themselves what they could get on better terms by producing something to exchange for it, his arguments may be conclusively shown to be contradictory. Such arguments, at least, cannot be worth considering. But, to say nothing of cases which may be put by an ingenious disputant in which this may not quite apply, we have to consider reasons which may be extra-economical. When it is suggested, for example, that the economic disadvantage is a fair price for political independence; or, on the other hand, that the stimulus of competition is actually good for the trade affected; or, again, that protection tends naturally to corruption; we have arguments which, good or bad, are outside the sphere of economics proper. To answer them we have to enter the field of political or ethical inquiry, where we have to take leave of tangible facts and precise measures.

This is a more prominent element as we approach

the more human side (if I may so call it) of Political Economy. Consider, for example, the doctrine which made so profound an impression upon the old school—Malthus's theory of population. It was summed up in the famous—though admittedly inaccurate—phrase, that population had a tendency to increase in a geometrical ratio, while the means of subsistence increased only in an arithmetical ratio. The food available for each unit would therefore diminish as the population increased. The so-called law obviously states only a possibility. It describes a "tendency," or, in other words, only describes what would happen under certain, admittedly variable, conditions. It showed how, in a limited area and with the efficiency of industry remaining unaltered, the necessary limits upon the numbers of the population would come into play. If, then, the law were taken, or in so far as it was taken, to assert that, in point of fact, the population must always be increasing in civilised countries to the stage at which the lowest class would be at starvation level, it was certainly erroneous. There are cases in which statesmen are alarmed by the failure of population to show its old elasticity, and beginning to revert to the view that an increased rate is desirable. It cannot be said to be even necessarily true that in all cases an increased population implies, of necessity, in-

creased difficulty of support. There are countries which are inadequately peopled, and where greater numbers would be able to support themselves more efficiently because they could adopt a more elaborate organisation. Nor can it be said with certainty that some pressure may not, within limits, be favourable to ultimate progress by stimulating the energies of the people. In a purely stationary state people might be too content with a certain stage of comfort to develop their resources and attain a permanently higher stage. Whatever the importance of such qualifications of the principle, there is a most important conclusion to be drawn. Malthus or his more rigid followers summed up their teaching by one practical moral. The essential condition of progress was, according to them, the discouragement of early marriages. If, they held, people could only be persuaded not to produce families until they had an adequate prospect of supporting their families, everything would go right. We shall not, I imagine, be inclined to dispute the proposition, that a certain degree of prudence and foresight is a quality of enormous value; and that such a quality will manifest itself by greater caution in taking the most important step in life. What such reasoners do not appear to have appreciated was, the immense complexity and difficulty of the demand which they were

making. They seem to have fancied that it was possible simply to add another clause—the clause “Thou shalt not marry”—to the accepted code of morals; and that, as soon as the evil consequences of the condemned behaviour were understood,—properly expounded, for example, in little manuals for the use of school children,—obedience to the new regulation would spontaneously follow. What they did not see, or did not fully appreciate, was the enormous series of other things—religious, moral, and intellectual—which are necessarily implied in altering the relation of the strongest human passion to the general constitution, and the impossibility of bringing home such an alteration, either by an act of legislation or by pointing out the bearing of a particular set of prudential considerations. Political Economy might be a very good thing; but its expositors were certainly too apt to think that it could by itself at once become a new gospel for mankind. Should we then infer from such criticisms that the doctrine of Malthus was false, or was of no importance? Nothing would be further from my opinion. I hold, on the contrary, that it was of the highest importance, because it drew attention to a fact, the recognition of which was essential to all sound reasoning on social questions. The fact is, that population is not to be treated as a fixed quan-

tity, but as capable of rapid expansion; and that this elasticity may at any moment require consideration, and does in fact give the explanation of many important phenomena. The main fact which gave importance to Malthus's writings was the rapid and enormous increase of pauperism during the first quarter of this century. The charitable and sentimental writers of the day were alarmed, but proposed to meet the evil by a reckless increase of charity, either of the official or the private variety. Pitt, we know, declared (though he qualified the statement) that to be the father of a large family should be a source of honour, not of obloquy; and the measures adopted under the influence of such notions did in fact tend to diminish all sense of responsibility, encouraged people to rely upon the parish for the support of their children, and brought about a state of things which alarmed all intelligent observers. The greatest check to the evil was given by the new Poor-law, adopted under the influence of the principles advocated by Malthus and his friends. His achievement, then, was not that he laid down any absolutely correct scientific truth, or even said anything which had not been more or less said by many judicious people before his time; but that he encouraged the application of a more systematic method of reasoning upon the great problem of the

time. Instead of simply giving way to the first kindly impulse, abolishing a hardship here and distributing alms elsewhere, he substantially argued that society formed a complex organism, whose diseases should be considered physiologically, their causes explained, and the appropriate remedies considered in all their bearings. We must not ask simply whether we were giving a loaf to this or that starving man, or indulge in *à priori* reasoning as to the right of every human being to be supported by others; but treat the question as a physician should treat a disease, and consider whether, on the whole, the new regulations would increase or diminish the causes of the existing evils. He did not, therefore, so much proclaim a new truth, as induce reformers to place themselves at a new and a more rational point of view. The so-called law of population which he announced might be in various ways inaccurate, but the announcement made it necessary for rational thinkers to take constantly into account considerations which are essential in any satisfactory treatment of the great problems. If it were right to consider pauperism as a gulf of fixed dimensions, we might hope to fill it by simply taking a sufficient quantity of wealth from the richer classes. If, as Malthus urged, this process had a tendency to enlarge the dimensions of the gulf itself, it was

obvious that the whole problem required a more elaborate treatment. By impressing people with this truth, and by showing how, in a great variety of cases, the elasticity of the population was a most important factor in determining the condition of the people, Malthus did a great service, and introduced a more systematic and scientific method of discussing the immensely important questions involved.

I will very briefly try to indicate one further application of economic principles. A critical point in the modern development of the study was marked by Mill's abandonment of the so-called "wage fund theory". That doctrine is now generally mentioned with contempt, as the most conspicuous instance of an entirely exploded theory. It is often said that it is either a falsity, or a barren truism. I am not about to argue the point, observing only that some very eminent Economists consider that it was rather inadequate than fallacious; and that to me it has always seemed that the theory which has really been confuted is not so much a theory which was ever actually held by Economists, as a formula into which they blundered when they tried to give a quasi-scientific definition of their meaning. It is common enough for people to argue sensibly, when the explicit statements of their argument may be altogether erroneous. At any rate, I think it has been a mis-

fortune that a good phrase has been discredited; and that Mill's assailants, in exposing the errors of that particular theory of a "wage fund," seemed to imply that the whole conception of a "wage fund" was a mistake. For the result has been, that the popular mind seems to regard the amount spent in wages as an arbitrary quantity; as something which, as Malthus put it, might be fixed at pleasure by her Majesty's justices of the peace. Because the law was inaccurately stated, it is assumed that there is no law at all, and that the share of the labourers in the total product of industry might be fixed without reference to the effect of a change upon the general organisation. Now, if the wage fund means the share which, under existing circumstances, actually goes to the class dependent upon wages, it is of the highest importance to discover how that share is actually determined; and it does not even follow that a doctrine which is in some sense a truism may not be a highly important doctrine. One of the ablest of the old Economists, Nassan Senior, after laying down his version of the theory, observes that it is "so nearly self-evident" that if Political Economy were a new science, it might be taken for granted. But he proceeds to enumerate seven different opinions, some of them held by many people, and others by writers of authority, with which it is

inconsistent. And, without following his arguments, this statement suggests what I take to be a really relevant defence of his reasons. At the time when the theory was first formulated, there were many current doctrines which were self-contradictory, and which could, therefore, best be met by the assertion of a truism. When the peace of 1815 brought distress instead of plenty, some people, such as Southey, thought it a sufficient explanation to say that the manufacturer had lost his best customer, because the Government wanted fewer guns and less powder. They chose to overlook the obvious fact that a customer who pays for his goods by taking money out of the pockets of the seller, is not an un-mixed blessing. Then, there was the theory of general "gluts," and of what is still denounced as over-production. The best cure for commercial distress would be, as one disputant asserted, to burn all the goods in our warehouses. It was necessary to point out that this theory (when stated in superficial terms) regarded superabundance of wealth as the cause of universal poverty. Another common theory was the evil effect of manufacturers in displacing work. The excellent Robert Owen stated it as an appalling fact, that the cotton manufacture supplanted the labour of a hundred (perhaps it was two hundred) millions of men. He seems to assume that,

if the machinery had not been there, there would still have been wages for the hundred millions. The curious confusion, indeed, which leads us to speak of men wanting work, when what we really mean is that they want wages, shows the tenacity of an old fallacy. Mandeville argued long ago that the fire of London was a blessing, because it set at work so many carpenters, plumbers, and glaziers. The Protestant Reformation had done less good than the invention of hooped petticoats, which had provided employment for so many milliners. I shall not insult you by exposing fallacies; and yet, so long as they survive, they have to be met by truisms. While people are proposing to lengthen their blankets by cutting off one end to sew upon the other, one has to point out that the total length remains constant. Now, I fancy that, in point of fact, these fallacies are often to be found in modern times. I read, the other day, in the papers, an argument, adduced by some advocate, on behalf of the Eight Hours Bill. He wished, he said, to make labour dear, and would therefore make it scarce. This apparently leads to the conclusion that the less people work the more they will get, which I take to be a fallacy. So, to mention nothing else, it is still apparently a common argument in favour of protection in America, that the native labourer requires to be supported against the pauperised

labour of Europe. Americans in general are to be made richer by paying higher prices, and by being forced to produce commodities which they could get with less labour employed on the production of other things in exchange. I will not go further; for I think that no one who reads the common arguments can be in want of sufficient illustrations of popular fallacies. This, I say, is some justification for dwelling upon the contrary truisms. I admit, indeed, that even these fallacies may apply to particular cases in which they may represent partial truths; and I also agree that, as sometimes stated, the wage fund theory was not only a truism, but a fruitless truism. It was, however, as I believe, an attempt to generalise a very pertinent and important doctrine, as to the way in which the actual competition in which labourers and employers are involved, actually operates. If so, it requires rather modification than indiscriminate denunciation; and it is, I believe, so treated by the best modern Economists.

I consider, then, that the Economists were virtually attempting to describe systematically the main relations of the industrial mechanism. They showed what were the main functions which it, in fact, discharges. Their theory was sufficient to expose many errors, especially those which arise from looking solely at one part of a complex process, and neglecting the

implied reactions. It enabled them to point out the inconsistencies and actual contradictions involved in many popular arguments, which are still very far from being destroyed. Their main error—apart from any particular logical slips—was, namely, that when they had laid down certain principles which belong properly to the prolegomena of the science, and which are very useful when regarded as providing logical tests of valid reasoning, they imagined that they had done a great deal more, and that the desired science was actually constituted. They laid down three or four primary axioms, such as the doctrine that men desire wealth, and fancied that the whole theory could be deduced from them. This, if what I have said be true, was really to misunderstand what they were really doing. It was to suppose that you could obtain a description of social phenomena without examining the actual structure of society; and was as erroneous as to suppose that you could deduce physiological truths from a few general propositions about the mechanical relations of the skeleton. Such criticisms have been made by the historical school of Economists; and I, at least, can fully accept their general view. I quite agree that the old assumptions of the older school were frequently unjustifiable; nor can I deny that they laid them down with a tone of superlative dogmatism, which was apt to be very offensive, and

which was not justified by their position. Moreover, I entirely agree that the progress of economic science, and of all other moral sciences, requires a historical basis; and that we should make a very great blunder if we thought that the creation of an economic man would justify us in dispensing with an investigation of concrete facts, both of the present day and of earlier stages of industrial evolution. But to this there is an obvious qualification. What do we mean by investigating facts? It seems to be a very simple rule, but it leads us at once to great difficulties. So, as Mill and later writers have very rightly asked, how are we to settle even the most obvious questions in inquiries where, for obvious reasons, we cannot make experiments, and where we have not such a set of facts as would spontaneously give us the truths which we might seek by experiment? Take, as Mill suggested, such a question as free trade. We cannot get two countries alike in all else, and differing only in respect to their adoption or rejection of a protective tariff. Anything like a thoroughgoing system of free trade has been tried in England alone; and the commercial prosperity of the country since its adoption has been affected by innumerable conditions, so that it is altogether impossible to isolate the results which are to be attributed to the negative condition of the

absence of protection. Briefly, the result is that the phenomena with which we have to deal are so complex, and our power of arranging them so as to unravel the complexity is so limited, that the direct method of observation breaks down altogether. Mill confessed the necessity of applying a different method, which he described with great ability, and which substantially amounts to the method of the older Economists. If, with some writers of the historical school, we admit the objections which apply to this method, we seem to be reduced to a hopeless state of uncertainty. A treatise on Political Economy becomes nothing but a miscellaneous collection of facts, with no definite clue or uniform method of reasoning. I must beg, in conclusion, to indicate what, so far as I can guess, seems to be the view suggested in presence of this difficulty.

If I am asked whether Political Economy, understood, for example, as Mill understood it, is to be regarded as a science, I should have to admit that I could not simply reply, Yes. To say nothing of any errors in his logic, I should say that I do not believe that it gives us sufficient guidance even in regard to economic phenomena. We could not, that is, deduce from the laws accepted by Economists the necessary working of any given measure—say, the effect of protection or free trade, or, still more, the making of a

poor-law system. Such problems involve elements of which the Economist, purely as an Economist, is an incompetent judge; and the further we get from those questions in which purely economical considerations are dominant, towards those in which other factors become relevant,—from questions as to currency, for example, to questions as to the relations of capitalists and labourers,—the greater the inadequacy of our methods. But I also hold that Political Economists may rightly claim a certain scientific character for their speculations. If their ultimate aim is to frame a science of economics which shall be part of the science—not yet constituted—of sociology, then I should say that what they have really done—so far as they have reasoned accurately—has been to frame an essential part of the prolegomena to such a science. The “laws” which they have tried to formulate are not laws which, even if established, would enable us to predict the results of any given action; but they are laws which would have to be taken into account in attempting any such prediction. And this is so, I think, because the laws are descriptions—within limits accurate descriptions—of actually existing facts as to the social mechanism. They are not mere abstract hypotheses, in the sense sometimes attached to that phrase; but accounts of the plan

upon which the industrial arrangements of civilised countries are, as a matter of fact, constructed. Such a classification and systematic account of facts is, as I should suggest, absolutely necessary for any sound historical method. Facts are not simply things lying about, which anybody can pick up and describe for the mere pains of collecting them. We cannot even see a fact without reflection and observation and judgment; and to arrange them in an order which shall be both systematic and fruitful, to look at them from that point of view in which we can detect the general underlying principles, is, in all cases, an essential process before we can begin to apply a truly historical method. Anything, it is said, may be proved by facts; and that is painfully true until we have the right method of what has been called “colligating” facts. The Catholic and the Protestant, the Conservative and the Radical, the Individualist and the Socialist, have equal facility in proving their own doctrines with arguments, which habitually begin, “All history shows”. Printers should be instructed always to strike out that phrase as an erratum; and to substitute, “I choose to take for granted”. In order to judge between them we have to come to some conclusion as to what is the right method of conceiving of history, and probably to try many methods before reaching that which

arranges the shifting and complicated chaos of phenomena in something like an intelligible order. A first step and a necessary basis, as I believe, for all the more complex inquiries will have to be found by disentangling the various orders of laws (if I may so speak), and considering by themselves those laws of industrial growth which are nearest to the physical sciences in certain respects, and which, within certain limits, can be considered apart, inasmuch as they represent the working of forces which are comparatively independent of forces of a higher order. What I should say for Political Economists is that they have done a good deal in this direction; that they have explained, and, I suppose, with considerable accuracy, what is the actual nature of the industrial mechanism; that they have explained fairly its working in certain cases where the economic are practically also the sole or dominant motives; and that they have thus laid down certain truths which require attention even when we take into account the play of other more complex and, as we generally say, higher motives. We may indeed hope and believe that society will ultimately be constituted upon a different system; and that for the organisation which has spontaneously and unconsciously developed itself, another will be substituted which will correspond more closely to some

principles of justice, and give freer scope for the full development of the human faculties. That is a very large question: I only say that, in any case, all genuine progress consists in a development of institutions already existing, and therefore that a full understanding of the working of the present system is essential to a rational consideration of possible improvements. The Socialist may look forward to a time—let us hope that it may come soon!—when nobody will have any grievances. But his schemes will be the better adapted for the realisation of his hopes in proportion as he has fully understood what is the part played by each factor of the existing system; what is its function, and how that function may be more efficiently discharged by any substitute. Only upon that condition can he avoid the common error of inventing some scheme which is in sociology what schemes for perpetual motion are in mechanics; plans for making everything go right by condemning some existing portion of the system without fully understanding how it has come into existence, and what is the part which it plays in the whole. I think myself that a study of the good old orthodox system of Political Economy is useful in this sense, even where it is wrong; because at least it does give a system, and therefore forces its opponents to present an alternative system, instead of simply

cutting a hole in the shoe when it pinches, or striking out the driving wheel because it happens to creak unpleasantly. And I think so the more because I cannot but observe that whenever a real economic question presents itself, it has to be argued on pretty much the old principles, unless we take the heroic method of discarding argument altogether. I should be the last to deny that the old Political Economy requires careful revision and modification, and equally slow to deny that the limits of its applicability require to be carefully defined. But, with these qualifications, I say, with equal conviction, that it does lay down principles which require study and consideration, for the simple reason that they assert the existence of facts which are relevant and important in all the most vitally interesting problems of to-day.

THE MORALITY OF COMPETITION.

WHEN it has occurred to me to say—as I have occasionally said—that, to my mind, the whole truth lies neither with the individualist nor with his antagonist, my friends have often assured me that I was illogical. Of two contradictory principles, they say, you must take one. There are cases, I admit, in which this remark applies. It is true, or it is not true, that two and two make four. We cannot, in arithmetic, adopt Sir Roger de Coverley's conciliatory view, that there is much to be said on both sides. But this logical rule supposes that, in point of fact, the two principles apply to the same case, and are mutually exclusive. I also think that the habit of taking for granted that social problems are reducible to such an alternative, is the source of innumerable fallacies. I hold that, as a rule, any absolute solution of such problems is impossible; and that a man who boasts of being logical, is generally announcing his deliberate intention to be one-sided. He is confusing the undeniable canon that of two contradictory propositions one must be true, with the

assumption that two propositions are really contradictory. The apparent contradiction may be illusory. Society, says the individualist, is made up of all its members. Certainly: if all Englishmen died, there would be no English race. But it does not follow that every individual Englishman is not also the product of the race. Society, says the Socialist, is an organic whole. I quite admit the fact; but it does not follow that, as a whole, it has any qualities or aims independent of the qualities and aims of the constituent parts. Metaphysicians have amused themselves, in all ages, with the puzzle about the many and the one. Perhaps they may find contradictions in the statement that a human society is both one and many; a unit and yet complex; but I am content to assume that unless we admit the fact, we shall get a very little way in sociology.

Society, we say, is an organism. That implies that every part of a society is dependent upon the other parts, and that although, for purposes of argument, we may find it convenient to assume that certain elements remain fixed while others vary, we must always remember that this is an assumption which, in the long run, never precisely corresponds to the facts. We may, for example, in economical questions, attend simply to the play of the ordinary industrial machinery, without taking into account

the fact that the industrial machinery is conditioned by the political and ecclesiastical constitution, by the whole social order, and, therefore, by the acceptance of corresponding ethical, or philosophical or scientific creeds. The method is justifiable so long as we remember that we are using a logical artifice; but we blunder if we take our hypothesis for a full statement of the actual facts. We are then tempted, and it is, perhaps, the commonest of all sources of error in such inquiries, to assume that conditions are absolute which are really contingent; or, to attend only to the action, without noticing the inevitable reactions of the whole system of institutions. And I would suggest, that from this follows a very important lesson in such inquiries. To say that this or that part of a system is bad, is to say, by implication, that some better arrangement is possible consistently with our primary assumptions. In other words, we cannot rationally propose simply to cut out one part of a machine, dead or living, without considering the effect of the omission upon all the other dependent parts. The whole system is necessarily altered. What, we must therefore ask, is the tacit implication as well as what is the immediate purpose of a change? May not the bad effect be a necessary part of the system to which we also owe the good; or necessary under some conditions? It is always,

therefore, a relevant question, what is the suggested alternative? We can then judge whether the removal of a particular evil is or is not to be produced at a greater cost than it is worth; whether it would be a process, say, of really curing a smoky chimney or of stopping the chimney altogether, and so abolishing not only the smoke but the fire.

I propose to apply this to the question of "competition". Competition is frequently denounced as the source of social evils. The complaint is far from a new one. I might take for my text a passage from J. S. Mill's famous chapter on the probable future of the labouring classes. Mill, after saying that he agrees with the Socialists in their practical aims, declares his utter dissent from their declamations against competition. "They forget," he says, "that where competition is not, monopoly is; and that monopoly, in all its forms, is the taxation of the industrious for the support of indolence, if not of plunder." That suggests my question: If competition is bad, what is good? What is the alternative to competition? Is it, as Mill says, monopoly, or is any third choice possible? If it is monopoly, do you defend monopoly, or only monopoly in some special cases? I opened, not long ago, an old book of caricatures, in which the revolutionary leader is carrying a banner with the double inscription, "No monopoly!

No competition!" The implied challenge—how can you abolish both?—seemed to me to require a plain answer. Directly afterwards I then took up the newspaper, and read the report of an address upon the prize-day of a school. The speaker dwelt in the usual terms upon the remorseless and crushing competition of the present day, which he mentioned as an incitement to every boy to get a good training for the struggle. The moral was excellent; but it seemed to me curious that the speaker should be denouncing competition in the very same breath with proofs of its influence in encouraging education. When I was a lad, a clever boy and a stupid boy had an equal chance of getting an appointment to a public office. The merit which won a place might be relationship to a public official, or perhaps to a gentleman who had an influence in the constituency of the official. The system was a partial survival of the good old days in which, according to Sam Weller, the young nobleman got a position because his mother's uncle's wife's grandfather had once lighted the King's pipe. The nobleman, I need hardly add, considered this as an illustration of the pleasant belief, "Whatever is, is right". As we had ceased to accept that opinion in politics, offices were soon afterwards thrown open to competition, with the general impression that we were doing justice

and opening a career to merit. That the resulting system has grave defects is, I think, quite undeniable; but so far as it has succeeded in determining that the men should be selected for public duty, for their fitness, and for nothing else, it is surely a step in advance which no one would now propose to retrace. And yet it was simply a substitution of competition for monopoly. As it comes into wider operation, some of us begin to cry out against competition. The respectable citizen asks, What are we to do with our boys? The obvious reply is, that he really means, What are we to do with our fools? A clever lad can now get on by his cleverness; and of course those who are not clever are thrust aside. That is a misfortune, perhaps, for them; but we can hardly regard it as a misfortune for the country. And clearly, too, pressure of this kind is likely to increase. We have come to believe that it is a main duty of the nation to provide general education. When the excellent Miss Hannah More began to spread village schools, she protested warmly that she would not teach children anything which would tend to make the poor discontented with their station. They must learn to read the Bible, but she hoped that they would stop short of such knowledge as would enable them to read Tom Paine. Now, Hannah More deserves our gratitude for her share in

setting the ball rolling; but it has rolled far beyond the limits she would have prescribed. We now desire not only that every child in the country should be able to acquire the elements of learning at least; but, further, we hope that ladders may be provided by which every promising child may be able to climb beyond the elements, and to acquire the fullest culture of which his faculties are capable. There is not only no credit at the present day in wishing so much, but it is discreditable not to do what lies in one's power to further its accomplishment. But, then, is not that to increase enormously the field of competition? I, for example, am a literary person, after a fashion; I have, that is, done something to earn a living by my pen. I had the advantage at starting of belonging to the small class which was well enough off to send its children to the best schools and universities. That is to say, I was one of the minority which had virtually a monopoly of education, and but for that circumstance I should in all probability have taken to some possibly more honest, but perhaps even worse paid, occupation. Every extension of the margin of education, everything which diffuses knowledge and intellectual training through a wider circle, must increase the competition among authors. If every man with brains, whether born in a palace or a cottage is to

have a chance of making the best of them, the capacity for authorship, and therefore the number of competitors, will be enormously spread. It may also, we will hope, increase the demand for their work. The same remark applies to every profession for which intellectual culture is a qualification. Do we regret the fact? Would we sentence three-quarters of the nation to remain stupid, in order that the fools in the remaining quarter may have a better chance? That would be contrary to every democratic instinct, to the highest as well as the lowest. But if I say, every office and every profession shall be open to every man; success in it shall depend upon his abilities and merits; and, further, every child in the country shall have the opportunity of acquiring the necessary qualifications, what is that but to accept and to stimulate the spirit of competition? What, I ask, is the alternative? Should people be appointed by interest? Or is nobody to be anxious for official or professional or literary or commercial success, but only to develop his powers from a sense of duty, and wait till some infallible observer comes round and says, "Friend, take this position, which you deserve"? Somehow I do not think that last scheme practicable at present. But, even in that case, I do not see how the merits of any man are to be tested without enabling him to

prove by experiment that he is the most meritorious person; and, if that be admitted, is not every step in promoting education, in equalising, therefore, the position from which men start for the race, a direct encouragement to competition?

Carlyle was fond of saying that Napoleon's great message to mankind was the declaration that careers should be open to talent, or the tools given to him who could use them. Surely that was a sound principle; and one which, so far as I can see, cannot be applied without stimulating competition. The doctrine, indeed, is unpalatable to many Socialists. To me, it seems to be one to which only the cowardly and the indolent can object in principle. Will not a society be the better off, in which every man is set to work upon the tasks for which he is most fitted? If we allowed our teaching and our thinking to be done by blockheads; our hard labour to be done by men whose muscles were less developed than their brains; made our soldiers out of our cowards, and our sailors out of the sea-sick,—should we be better off? It seems, certainly, to me, that whatever may be the best constitution of society, one mark of it will be the tendency to distribute all social functions according to the fitness of the agents; to place trust where trust is justifiable, and to give the fullest scope for every proved ability, intellectual, moral, and physical.

Of course, such approximation to this result, as we can observe in the present order of things, is very imperfect. Many of the most obvious evils in the particular system of competition now adopted, may be summed up in the statement, that the tests according to which success is awarded, are not so contrived as to secure the success of the best competitors. Some of them, for example, are calculated to give an advantage to the superficial and the showy. But that is to say that they are incompatible with the true principle which they were intended to embody; and that we should reform our method, not in the direction of limiting competition, but in the direction of so framing our system that it may be a genuine application of Carlyle's doctrine. In other words, in all the professions for which intellectual excellence is required, the conditions should be such as to give the best man the best chance, as far as human arrangements can secure that object. What other rule can be suggested? Competition, in this sense, means the preservation of the very atmosphere which is necessary to health; and to denounce it is either to confirm the most selfish and retrograde principles, or to denounce something which is only called competition by a confusion of ideas. How easy such a confusion may be, is obvious when we look at the ordinary language about industrial competition. We

are told that wages are kept down by competition. To this Mill replied in the passage I have quoted, and, upon his own theory, at any rate, replied with perfect justice, that they were also kept up by competition. The common language upon the subject is merely one instance of the fallacies into which men fall when they personify an abstraction. Competition becomes a kind of malevolent and supernatural being, to whose powers no conceivable limits are assigned. It is supposed to account for any amount of degradation. Yet if, by multiplying their numbers, workmen increase supply, and so lower the price of labour, it follows, conversely, by the very same reasoning, that if they refused to multiply, they would diminish the supply and raise the price. The force, by its very nature, operates as certainly in one direction as in the other. If, again, there is competition among workmen, there is competition among capitalists. In every strike, of course, workmen apply the principle, and sometimes apply it very effectually, in the attempt to raise their wages. It was often argued, indeed, that in this struggle, the employer possessed advantages partly due to his power of forming tacit combinations. The farmers in a parish, or the manufacturers in a business, were pledged to each other not to raise the rate of wages. If that be so, you again complain, not of competition,

but of the want of competition; and you agree that the labourer will benefit, as in fact, I take it, he has undoubtedly benefited, by freer competition among capitalists, or by the greater power of removing his own labour to better markets. In such cases, the very meaning of the complaint is not that there is competition, but that the competition is so arranged as to give an unfair advantage to one side. And a similar misunderstanding is obviously implied in other cases. The Australian or American workman fears that his wages will be lowered by the competition of the Chinese; and the Englishman protests against the competition of pauper aliens. Let us assume that he is right in believing that such competition will tend to lower his wages, whatever the moral to be drawn from the fact. Briefly, denunciations of "competition" in this sense are really complaints that we do not exclude the Chinese immigrant and therefore give a monopoly to the native labourer. That may be a good thing for him, and if it be not a good thing for the Chinaman who is excluded from the field, we perhaps do not care very much about the results to China. We are so much better than the heathen that we need not bother about their interests. But, of course, the English workman, when he complains of the intensity of competition, does not propose to adopt the analogous

remedy of giving a monopoly to one section of our own population. The English pauper is here; we do not want to suppress him, but only to suppress his pauperism; and he certainly cannot be excluded from any share in the fund devoted to the support of labour. The evil, therefore, of which we complain is primarily the inadequacy of the support provided, not,—though that may also be complained of,—the undesirable method by which those funds are distributed. In other words, the complaint may so far be taken to mean that there are too many competitors, not that, given the competitors, their shares are determined by competition, instead of being determined by monopoly or by some other principle.

We have therefore to inquire whether any principle can be suggested which will effect the desired end, and which will yet really exclude competition. The popular suggestion is that the remedy lies in suppressing competition by equalising the prizes. If no prizes are to be won, there will so far be less reason for competing. Enough may be provided for all by simply taking something from those who have too much. Now, I may probably assume that we all agree in approving the contemplated end—a greater equality of wealth, and especially an elevation of the lower classes to a higher position in

the scale of comfort. Every social reformer, whatever his particular creed, would probably agree that some of us are too rich, and that a great many are too poor. But we still have to ask, in what sense it is conceivable that a real suppression of competition can contribute to the desired end. It is obvious that when we denounce competition we often mean not that it is to be abolished, but that it is to be regulated and limited in its application. So, for example, people sometimes speak as if competition were the antithesis to co-operation. But I need hardly say that individualists, as well as their opponents, may legitimately sing the praises of co-operation. Nobody was more forward than Mill, for example, and Mill's followers, in advocating the principles of the early co-operative societies. He and they rejoiced to believe that the co-operative societies had revealed unsuspected virtues and capacities in the class from which they sprang; that they had done much to raise the standard of life and to extend sympathy and human relations among previously disconnected units of society. But it is, of course, equally obvious that they have grown up in a society which supposes free competition in every part of its industrial system; that co-operative societies, so far as the outside world is concerned, have to buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest market; that

the rate of wages of their members is still fixed by competition; and that they encourage habits of saving and forethought which presuppose that each man is to have private ends of his own. In what sense, then, can co-operation ever be regarded as really opposed to competition? Competition may exist among groups of men just as much as among individuals: a state of war is not less a state of war if it is carried on by regiments and armies, instead of by mere chaotic struggles in which each man fights for his own hand. Competition does not mean that there should be no combination, but that there should be no monopoly. So long as a trade or a profession is open to every one who chooses to take it up, its conduct will be equally regulated by competition, whether it be competition as between societies or individuals, or whether its profits be divided upon one system or another between the various classes concerned. Co-operators, of course, may look forward to a day in which society at large will be members of a single co-operative society; or, again, to a time in which every industrial enterprise may be conducted by the State. Supposing any such aspiration to be realised, the question still remains, whether they would amount to the abolition or still only to the shifting of the incidence of competition. Socialists tell us that

hitherto the labourer has not had his fair share of the produce of industry. The existing system has sanctioned a complicated chicanery, by which one class has been enabled to live as mere bloodsuckers and parasites upon the rest of society. Property is the result of theft, instead of being, as Economists used to assure us, the reward of thrift. It is hoped that these evils may be remedied by a reconstruction of society, in which the means of production shall all be public property, and every man's income be simply a salary in proportion to the quantity of his labour. If we, then, ask how far competition would be abolished, we may first make one remark. Such a system, like every other system, requires, for its successful working, that the instincts and moral impulses should correspond to the demands of the society. Absolute equality of property is just as compatible with universal misery as with universal prosperity. A population made up of thoroughly lazy, sensual, stupid individuals could, if it chose, work such a machinery so as to suppress all who were industrious, refined and intelligent. However great may be the revenue of a nation, it is a very simple problem of arithmetic to discover how many people could be supported just above the starvation level. The nation at large would, on the supposed system, have to decide how its numbers and wants

are to be proportioned to its means. If individuals do not compete, the whole society has, presumably, to compete with other societies; and, in every case whatever, with the general forces of nature. An indolent and inefficient majority might decide, if it pleased, that the amount of work to be exacted should be that which would be just enough to provide the simplest material necessities. If, again, the indolent and inefficient are to exist at all,—and we can scarcely count upon their disappearance,—and if further, they are to share equally with the industrious and the efficient, we must, in some way, coerce them into the required activity. If every industrial organisation is to be worked by the State, the State, it would seem, must appeal to the only means at its disposal,—namely, the prison and the scourge. If, moreover, the idle and sensual choose to multiply, the State must force them to refrain, or the standard of existence will be lowered. And, therefore, as is often argued, Socialism logically carried out would, under such conditions, lead to slavery; to a state in which labour would be enforced, and the whole system of life absolutely regulated by the will of the majority; and, in the last resort, by physical force. That seems, I confess, to be a necessary result, unless you can assume a moral change, which is entirely different from the mere change of

machinery, and not necessarily implied, nor even made probable, by the change. The intellectual leaders of Socialism, no doubt, assume that the removal of "injustice" will lead to the development of a public spirit which will cause the total efficiency to be as great as it is at present, or perhaps greater. But the mass who call themselves Socialists take, one suspects, a much simpler view. They are moved by the very natural, but not especially lofty, desire to have more wages and less work. They take for granted that if their share of the total product is increased, they will get a larger dividend; and do not stop to inquire whether the advantage may be not more than counterbalanced by the diminution of the whole product, when the present incitements to industry are removed. They argue, —that is, so far as they argue at all,—as though the quantity to be distributed were a fixed quantity, and regard capitalists as pernicious persons, somehow intercepting a lion's share of the stream of wealth which, it is assumed, would flow equally if they were abolished. That is, of course, to beg the whole question.

I, however, shall venture to assume that the industrial machinery requires a corresponding moral force to work it; and I, therefore, proceed to ask how such a force can be supposed to act without

some form of competition. Nothing, as a recent writer suggests,—ironically, perhaps,—could be easier than to secure an abolition of competition. You have only to do two things: to draw a "ring-fence" round your society, and then to proportion the members within the fence to the supplies. The remark suggests the difficulty. A ring-fence, for example, round London or Manchester would mean the starvation of millions in a month; or, if round England, the ruin of English commerce, the enormous rise in the cost of the poor man's food, and the abolition of all his little luxuries. But, if you include even a population as large as London, what you have next to do is to drill some millions of people—vast numbers of them poor, reckless, ignorant, sensual, and selfish—to regulate their whole mode of life by a given code, and refrain from all the pleasures which they most appreciate. The task is a big one, and not the less if you have also to undertake that everybody, whatever his personal qualities, shall have enough to lead a comfortable life. I do not suppose, however, that any rational Socialist would accept that programme of isolation. He would hold that, in his Utopia, we can do more efficiently all that is done under a system which he regards as wasteful and unjust. The existing machinery, whatever else may be said of it, does, in fact, tend to weld the

whole world more and more into a single industrial organism. English workmen are labouring to satisfy the wants of other human beings in every quarter of the world; while Chinese, and Africans, and Europeans, and Americans are also labouring to satisfy theirs. This vast and almost inconceivably complex machinery has grown up in the main unconsciously, or, at least, with a very imperfect anticipation of the ultimate results, by the independent efforts of innumerable inventors, and speculators, and merchants, and manufacturers, each of them intent, as a rule, only upon his own immediate profits and the interests of the little circle with which he is in immediate contact. The theory is not, I suppose, that this gigantic system of mutual interdependence should be abolished or restricted, but that it should be carried on consciously, with definite and intelligible purpose, and in such a way as to promote the interests of every fraction of society. The whole organism should resemble one worked by a single brain, instead of representing the resultant of a multitude of distracted and conflicting forces. The difficulties are obvious enough, nor need I dwell upon them here. I will not inquire whether it does not suppose something like omniscience in the new industrial leaders; and whether the restless and multifarious energy now displayed in discovering

new means of satisfying human wants could be supplied by a central body, or a number of central bodies, made up of human beings, and, moreover, official human beings, reluctant to try experiments and strike into new courses, and without the present motives for enterprise. "Individualists" have enlarged sufficiently upon such topics. What I have to note is that, in any case, the change supposes the necessity of a corresponding morality in the growth of the instincts, the public spirit, the hatred of indolence, the temperance and self-command which would be requisite to work it efficiently. The organisation into which we are born presupposes certain moral instincts, and, moreover, necessarily implies a vast system of moral discipline. Our hopes and aspirations, our judgments of our neighbours and of ourselves, are at every moment guided and moulded by the great structure of which we form a part. Whenever we ask how our lives are to be directed, what are to be the terms on which we form our most intimate ties, whom we are to support or suppress, how we are to win respect or incur contempt, we are profoundly affected by the social relations in which we are placed at our birth, and the corresponding beliefs or prejudices which we have unconsciously imbibed. Such influences, it may perhaps be said, are of incomparably greater import-

ance than the direct exhortations to which we listen, or than the abstract doctrines which we accept in words, but which receive their whole colouring from the concrete facts to which they conform. Now, I ask how such discipline can be conceived without some kind of competition; or, rather, what would be the discipline which would remain if, in some sense, competition could be suppressed? If in the ideal society there are still prizes to be won, positions which may be the object of legitimate desire, and if those positions are to be open to every one, whatever his circumstances, we might still have the keenest competition, though carried on by different methods. If, on the other hand, no man's position were to be better than another's, we might suppress competition at the price of suppressing every motive for social as well as individual improvement. In any conceivable state of things, the welfare of every society, the total means of enjoyment at its disposal, must depend upon the energy, intelligence, and trustworthiness of its constituent members. Such qualities, I need hardly say, are qualities of individuals. Unless John and Peter and Thomas are steady, industrious, sober, and honest, the society as a whole will be neither honest nor sober nor prosperous. The problem, then, becomes, how can you ensure the existence of such qualities unless John and Peter and

the rest have some advantage in virtue of possessing them? Somehow or other, a man must be the better off for doing his work well and treating his neighbour fairly. He ought surely to hold the positions in which such qualities are most required, and to have, if possible, the best chance of being a progenitor of the rising generation. A social condition in which it made no difference to a man, except so far as his own conscience was concerned, whether he were or were not honest, would imply a society favourable to people without a conscience, because giving full play to the forces which make for corruption and disintegration. If you remove the rewards accessible to the virtuous and peaceful, how are you to keep the penalties which restrain the vicious and improvident? A bare repeal of the law, "If a man will not work, neither shall he eat," would not of itself promote industry. You would at most remove the compulsion which arises from competition, to introduce the compulsion which uses physical force. You would get rid of what seems to some people the "natural" penalty of want following waste, and be forced to introduce the "artificial" or legislative penalty of compulsory labour. But, otherwise, you must construct your society so that, by the spontaneous play of society, the purer elements may rise to the surface, and the scum sink to the bottom. So long as human nature varies

indefinitely, so long as we have knaves and honest men, sinners and saints, cowards and heroes, some process of energetic and active sifting is surely essential to the preservation of social health; and it is difficult to see how that is conceivable without some process of active and keen competition.

The Socialist will, of course, say, and say with too much truth, that the present form of competition is favourable to anti-social qualities. If, indeed, a capitalist is not a person who increases the productive powers of industry, but a person who manages simply to intercept a share produced by the industry of others, there is, of course, much to be said for this view. I cannot now consider that point, for my subject to-day is the moral aspect of competition considered generally. And what I have just said suggests what is, I think, the more purely moral aspect of the question. A reasonable Socialist desires to maintain what is good in the existing system, while suppressing its abuses. The question, What is good? is partly economical; but it is partly also ethical: and it is with that part that I am at present concerned.

Any system of competition, any system which supposes a reward for virtue other than virtue itself, may be accused of promoting selfishness and other ugly qualities. The doctrine that virtue is its own

reward is very charming in the mouth of the virtuous man; but when his neighbours use it as an excuse for not rewarding him, it becomes rather less attractive. It saves a great deal of trouble, no doubt, and relieves us from an awkward responsibility. I must, however, point out, in the first place, that a fallacy is often introduced into these discussions which Mr. Herbert Spencer has done a great deal to expose. He has dwelt very forcibly, for example, on the fact that it is a duty to be happy and healthy; and that selfishness, if used in a bad sense, should not mean simply regard for ourselves, but only disregard for our neighbours. We ought not, in other words, to be unjust because we ourselves happen to be the objects of injustice. The parable of the good Samaritan is generally regarded as a perfect embodiment of a great moral truth. Translated from poetry into an abstract logical form, it amounts to saying that we should do good to the man who most needs our services, whatever be the accidents which alienate ordinary sympathies. Now, suppose that the good Samaritan had himself fallen among thieves, what would have been his duty? His first duty, I should say, would have been, if possible, to knock down the thief; his second, to tie up his own wounds; and his third, to call in the police. We should not, perhaps, call him virtuous for

such conduct; but we should clearly think him wrong for omitting it. Not to resist a thief is cowardly; not to attend to your own health is to incapacitate yourself for duty; not to apply to the police is to be wanting in public spirit. Assuming robbery to be wrong, I am not the less bound to suppress it because I happen to be the person robbed; I am only bound not to be vindictive—that is, not to allow my personal feelings to make me act otherwise than I should act if I had no special interest in the particular case. Adam Smith's favourite rule of the "indifferent spectator" is the proper one in the case. I should be impartial, and incline no more to severity than to lenity, because I am forced by circumstances to act both as judge and as plaintiff. So, in questions of self-support, it is obviously a fallacy to assume that an action, directed in the first instance to a man's own benefit, is therefore to be stigmatised as selfish. On the good Samaritan's principle, a person should be supported, *ceteris paribus*, by the person who can do it most efficiently, and in nine cases out of ten that person is himself. If self-support is selfish in the sense that the service is directly rendered to self, it is not the less unselfish in so far as it is necessarily also a service to others. If I keep myself by my labour, I am preventing a burden from falling upon my

fellows. And, of course, the case is stronger when I include my family. We were all impressed the other day by the story of the poor boy who got some wretchedly small pittance by his work, spent a small portion of it upon his own needs, and devoted the chief part of it to trying to save his mother and her other children from starvation. Was he selfish? Was he selfish even in taking something for himself, as the only prop of his family? What may be the immediate motive of a man when he is working for his own bread and the bread of his family may often be a difficult question; but as, in point of fact, he is helping not only himself and those who depend on him, but also in some degree relieving others from a burden, his conduct must clearly not be set down as selfish in any sense which involves moral disapproval.

Let us apply this to the case of competition. The word is generally used to convey a suggestion of selfishness in a bad sense. We think of the hardship upon the man who is ousted, as much as of the benefit to the man who gets in; or perhaps we think of it more. It suggests to us that one man has been shut out for the benefit of his neighbour; and that, of course, suggests envy, malice, and all uncharitableness. We hold that such competition must generate ill-will. I used—when I was intimately connected

with a competitive system at the university—to hear occasionally of the evil influences of competition, as tending to promote jealousy between competitors. I always replied that, so far as my experience went, the evil was altogether imaginary. So far from competition generating ill-will, the keenest competitors were, as a rule, the closest friends. There was no stronger bond than the bond of rivalry in our intellectual contests. One main reason was, of course, that we had absolute faith in the fairness of the competition. We felt that it would be unworthy to complain of being beaten by a better man; and we had no doubt that, in point of fact, the winners were the better men; or, at any rate, were honestly believed to be the better men by those who distributed honours. The case, though on a small scale, may suggest one principle. So far as the end of such competitions is good, the normal motives cannot be bad. The end of a fair competition is the discovery of the ablest men, with a view to placing them in the position where their talents may be turned to most account. It can only be achieved so far as each man does his best to train his own powers, and is prepared to test them fairly against the powers of others. To work for that end is, then, not only permissible, but a duty. The spirit in which the end is pursued may be bad, in so far as

a man pursues it by unfair means; in so far as he tries to make sham performance pass off for genuine; or, again, in so far as he sets an undue value upon the reward, as apart from the qualities by which it is gained. But if he works simply with the desire of making the best of himself, and if the reward is simply such a position as may enable him to be most useful to society, the competition which results will be bracing and invigorating, and will appeal to no such motives as can be called, in the bad sense, selfish. He is discharging a function which is useful, it is true, to himself; but which is also intrinsically useful to the whole society. The same principle applies, again, to intellectual activity in general. All genuine thought is essentially useful to mankind. In the struggle to discover truth, even our antagonists are, necessarily, our co-operators. A philosopher, as a man of science, owes, at least, as much to those who differ from him, as to those who agree with him. The conflict of many minds, from many sides, is the essential condition of intellectual progress. Now, if a man plays his part manfully and honourably in such a struggle, he deserves our gratitude, even if he takes the wrong side. If he looks forward to the recognition by the best judges as one motive for his activity, I think that he is asking for a worthy reward. He deserves blame, only

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so far as his motives have a mixture of unworthy personal sentiment. Obviously, if he aims at cheap fame, at making a temporary sensation instead of a permanent impression, at flattering prejudices instead of spreading truth; or, if he shows greediness of notoriety, by trying to get unjust credit, as we sometimes see scientific people squabbling over claims to the first promulgation of some trifling discovery, he is showing paltriness of spirit. The men whom we revere are those who, like Faraday or Darwin, devoted themselves exclusively to the advancement of knowledge, and would have scorned a reputation won by anything but genuine work. The fact that there is a competition in such matters implies, no doubt, a temptation,—the temptation to set a higher value upon praise than upon praiseworthiness; but I think it not only possible that the competitors in such rivalries may keep to the honourable path, but probable that, as a matter of fact, they frequently,—I hope that I may say generally,—do so. If the fame at which a man aims be not that which “in broad rumour lies,” but that which “lives and spreads aloft in those pure eyes and perfect witness of all-judging Jove,” then I think that the desire for it is scarcely to be called a last infirmity—rather, it is an inseparable quality of noble minds. We wish to honour men who have been good soldiers in that

warfare, and we can hardly wish them to be indifferent to our homage.

We may add, then, that a competition need not be demoralising when the competitors have lofty aims and use only honourable means. When, passing from purely intellectual aims, we consider the case, say, of the race for wealth, we may safely make an analogous remark. If a man's aim in becoming rich is of the vulgar kind; if he wishes to make an ostentatious display of wealth, and to spend his money upon demoralising amusement; or if, again, he tries to succeed by quackery instead of by the production of honest work, he is, of course, so far mischievous and immoral. But a man whose aims are public-spirited, nay, even if they be such as simply tend to improve the general comfort; who develops, for example, the resources of the country, and introduces new industries or more effective modes of manufacture, is, undoubtedly, in fact conferring a benefit upon his fellows, and may, so far, be doing his duty in the most effectual way open to him. If he succeeds by being really a more efficient man of business than his neighbours, he is only doing what, in the interests of all, it is desirable that he should do. He is discharging an essential social function; and what is to be desired is, that he should feel the responsibility involved, that he should regard his

work as on one side the discharge of a social function, and not simply as a means of personal aggrandisement. It is not the fact that he is competing that is against him; but the fact, when it is a fact, that there is something discreditable about the means which he adopts, or the reward that he contemplates.

This, indeed, suggests another and a highly important question—the question, namely, whether, in our present social state, his reward may not be excessive, and won at too great a cost to his rivals. And, without going into other questions involved, I will try to say a little, in conclusion, upon this, which is certainly a pressing problem. Competition, I have suggested, is not immoral if it is a competition in doing honest work by honourable means, and if it is also a fair competition. But it must, of course, be added, that fairness includes more than the simple equality of chances. It supposes, also, that there should be some proportion between the rewards and the merits. If it is simply a question between two men, which shall be captain of a ship, and which shall be mate, then the best plan is to decide by their merits as sailors; and, if their merits be fairly tried, the loser need bear no grudge against the winner. But when we have such cases as sometimes occur, when, for example, the ship is cast away, and it becomes a question whether I shall eat you or you shall

eat me, or, let us say, which of us is to have the last biscuit, we get one of those terrible cases of temptation in which the strongest social bonds sometimes give way under the strain. The competition, then, becomes, in the highest degree, demoralising, and the struggle for existence resolves itself into a mere unscrupulous scramble for life, at any sacrifice of others. That, it is sometimes said, is a parallel to our social state at present. If I gave an excessive prize to the first boy in a school and flogged the second, I should not be doing justice. If one man is rewarded for a moderate amount of forethought by becoming a millionaire, and his unsuccessful rivals punished by starvation or the workhouse, the lottery of life is not arranged on principles of justice. A man must be a very determined optimist if he denied the painful truth to be found in such statements. He must be blind to many evils if he does not perceive the danger of dulling his sympathies by indifference to the fate of the unsuccessful. The rich man in Clough's poem observes that, whether there be a God matters very little—

For I and mine, thank somebody,
Manage to get our victual.

But, even if we are not very rich, we must often, I think, doubt whether we are not wrapping ourselves in a spirit of selfish complacency when we are

returning to a comfortable home and passing outcasts of the street. We must sometimes reflect that our comfort is not simply a reward for virtue or intelligence, even if it be not sometimes the prize of actual dishonesty. To shut our eyes to the mass of wretchedness around us is to harden our hearts, although to open our hands is too often to do more harm than good. It is no wonder that we should be tempted to declaim against competition, when the competition means that so many unfortunates are to be crowded off their narrow standing-ground into the gulf of pauperism.

This may suggest the moral which I have been endeavouring to bring out. Looking at society at large, we may surely say that it will be better in proportion as every man is strenuously endeavouring to play his part, and in which the parts are distributed to those best fitted to play them. We must admit, too, that for any period to which we can look forward, the great mass of mankind will find enough to occupy their energies in labouring primarily for their own support, and so bearing the burden of their own needs and the needs of their families. We may infer, too, that a society will be the better so far as it gives the most open careers to all talents, wherever displayed, and as it shows respect for the homely virtues of industry, integrity, and fore-

thought, which are essential to the whole body as to its constituent members. And we may further say that the corresponding motives in the individual cannot be immoral. A desire of independence, the self-respect which makes a man shrink from accepting as a gift what he can win as a fair reward, the love of fairplay, which makes him use only honest means in the struggle, are qualities which can never lose their value, and which are not the less valuable because in the first instance they are most profitable to their possessors. Nothing which tends to weaken such motives can be good; but while they preserve their intensity, they necessarily imply the existence of competition in some form or other.

It is equally clear that competition by itself is not a sufficient panacea. Whenever we take an abstract quality, personify it by the help of capital letters, and lay it down as the one principle of a complex system, we generally blunder. Competition is as far as possible from being the solitary condition of a healthy society. It must be not only a competition for worthy ends by honourable means, but should be a competition so regulated that the reward may bear some proportion to the merit. Monopoly is an evil in so far as it means an exclusive possession of some advantages or privileges, especially when they are given by the accidents of birth or position. It is

something if they are given to the best and the ablest; but the evil still remains if even the best and ablest are rewarded by a position which cramps the energies and lowers the necessity of others. Competition is only desirable in so far as it is a process by which the useful qualities are encouraged by an adequate, and not more than an adequate, stimulus; and in which, therefore, there is not involved the degradation and the misery on the one side, the excessive reward on the other, of the unsuccessful and the successful in the struggle. Competition, therefore, we might say, could be unequivocally beneficial only in an ideal society; in a state in which we might unreservedly devote ourselves to making the best of our abilities and accepting the consequent results, without the painful sense in the background that others were being sacrificed and debased; crushed because they had less luck in the struggle, and were, perhaps, only less deserving in some degree than ourselves. So long as we are still far enough from having realised any such state; so long as we feel, and cannot but feel, that the distribution of rewards is so much at the mercy of chance, and so often goes to qualities which, in an ideal state, would deserve rather reprobation than applause, we can only aim at better things. We can do what in us lies to level some inequalities, to work, so far as

our opportunities enable us, in the causes which are mostly beneficial for the race, to spread enlightenment and good feeling, and to help the unfortunate. But it is also incumbent upon us to remember carefully, what is so often overlooked in the denunciations of competition, that the end for which we must hope, and the approach to which we must further, is one in which the equivocal virtue of charity shall be suppressed; that is, in which no man shall be dependent upon his neighbour in such a sense as to be able to neglect his own duties; in which there may be normally a reciprocity of good services, and the reciprocity not be (as has been said) all on one side. There is a very explicable tendency at present to ask for such one-sided reciprocity. It is natural enough, for reasons too obvious to be mentioned, that reformers should dwell exclusively upon the right of every one to support, and neglect to point out the correlative duty of every one to do his best to support himself. The popular arguments about "old-age pensions" may illustrate the general state of mind. It is disgraceful, people say, that so large a proportion of the aged poor should come to depend upon the rates. Undoubtedly it is disgraceful. Then upon whom does the disgrace fall? It sounds harsh to say that it falls upon the sufferers. We shrink from saying to a pauper, "It serves you right".

That sounds brutal, and is only in part true. Still, we should not shrink from stating whatever is true, painful though it may be. It sounds better to lay all the blame upon the oppressor than to lay it upon the oppressed; and yet, as a rule, the cowardice or folly of the oppressed has generally been one cause of their misfortunes, and cannot be overlooked in a true estimate of the case. That drunkenness, improvidence, love of gambling, and so forth, do in fact lead to pauperism is undeniable; and that they are bad, and so far disgraceful, is a necessary consequence. In such cases, then, pauperism is a proof of bad qualities; and the fact, like all other facts, must be recognised. The stress of argument, therefore, is laid upon the hardships suffered by the honest and industrious poor. The logical consequence should be, that the deserving poor should become pensioners, and the undeserving paupers. This at once opens the amazingly difficult question of moral merit, and the power of poor-law officials to solve problems which would certainly puzzle the keenest psychologists. Suppose, for example, that a man, without being definitely vicious, has counted upon the promised pension, and therefore neglected any attempts to save. If you give him a pension, you virtually tell everybody that saving is a folly; if you don't, you inflict upon him the stigma which is deserved by the

drunkard and the thief. So difficult is it to arrange for this proposed valuation of a man's moral qualities that it has been proposed to get rid of all stigma by making it the right and duty of every one to take a pension. That might conceivably alter the praise, but it would surely not alter the praiseworthiness. It must be wrong in me to take money from my neighbours when I don't want it; and, if wrong, it surely ought to be disgraceful. And this seems to indicate the real point. We may aim at altering the facts, at making them more conducive to good qualities; but we cannot alter or attempt to decide by laws the degree of praise or blame to be attached to individuals. It would be very desirable to bring about a state of things in which no honest and provident man need ever fall into want; and, in that state, pauperism would be rightly discreditable as an indication of bad qualities. But to say that nobody shall be ashamed of taking support would be to ruin the essential economic virtues, and to pauperise the nation; and to try to lay down precise rules as to the distribution of honour and discredit, seems, to me, to be a problem beyond the power of a legislature. I express no opinion upon the question itself, because I am quite incompetent to do so. I only refer to it as illustrating the difficulties which beset us when we try to remove the

evils of the present system, and yet to preserve the stimulus to industry, which is implied in competition. The shortest plan is to shut one's eyes to the difficulty, and roundly deny its existence. I hope that our legislators may hit upon some more promising methods. The ordinary mode of cutting the knot too often suggests that the actually contemplated ideal is the land in which the chickens run about ready roasted, and the curse of labour is finally removed from mankind. The true ideal, surely, is the state in which labour shall be generally a blessing; in which we shall recognise the fact—disagreeable or otherwise—that the race can only be elevated by the universal diffusion of public spirit, and a general conviction that it is every man's first duty to cultivate his own capacities, to turn them to the best possible account, and to work strenuously and heartily in whatever position he has been placed. It is because I cannot help thinking that when we attack competition in general terms, we are, too often, blinding ourselves to those homely and often-repeated, and, as I believe, indisputable truths, that I have ventured to speak to-day, namely, on the side of competition—so far, at least, on the side of competition as to suggest that our true ideal should be, not a state, if such a state be conceivable, in which there is no competition, but a state in which competition should

be so regulated that it should be really equivalent to a process of bringing about the best possible distribution of the whole social forces; and should be held to be, because it would really be, not a struggle of each man to seize upon a larger share of insufficient means, but the honest effort of each man to do the very utmost he can to make himself a thoroughly efficient member of society.

SOCIAL EQUALITY.

THE problem of which I propose to speak is the old dispute between Dives and Lazarus. Lazarus, presumably, was a better man than Dives. How could Dives justify himself for living in purple and fine linen, while Lazarus was lying at the gates, with the dogs licking his sores? The problem is one of all ages, and takes many forms. When the old Puritan saw a man going to the gallows, "There," he said, "but for the grace of God, goes John Bradford". When the rich man, entering his club, sees some wretched tatterdemalion, slouching on the pavement, there, he may say, goes Sir Gorgius Midas, but for—what? I am here and he there, he may say, because I was the son of a successful stock-jobber, and he the son of some deserted mother at the workhouse. That is the cause, but is it a reason? Suppose, as is likely enough, that Lazarus is as good a man as Midas, ought they not to change places, or to share their property equally? A question, certainly, to be asked, and, if possible, to be answered.

It is often answered, and is most simply answered,

by saying that all men ought to be equal. Dives should be cut up and distributed in equal shares between Lazarus and his brethren. The dogma which embodies this claim is one which is easily refuted in some of the senses which it may bear, though in spite of such refutations it has become an essential part of the most genuine creed of mankind. The man of science says, with perfect truth, that so far from men being born equal, some are born with the capacity of becoming Shakespeares and Newtons, and others with scarcely the power of rising above Sally the chimpanzee. The answer would be conclusive, if anybody demanded that we should all be just six feet high, with brains weighing sixty ounces, neither more nor less. It is also true, and, I conceive, more relevant, that, as the man of science will again say, all improvement has come through little groups of men superior to their neighbours, through races or through classes, which, by elevating themselves on the shoulders of others, have gained leisure and means for superior cultivation. But equality may be demanded as facilitating this process, by removing the artificial advantages of wealth. It may be taken as a demand for a fair start, not as a demand that the prizes shall be distributed irrespectively of individual worth. And, whether the demand is rightly or wrongly expressed, we must, I

think, admit that the real force with which we have to reckon is the demand for justice and for equality as somehow implied by justice. It is easy to browbeat a poor man who wants bread and cheese for himself and his family, by calling his demands materialistic, and advising him to turn his mind to the future state, where he will have the best of Dives. It is equally easy to ascribe the demands to mere envy and selfishness, or to those evil-minded agitators who, for their own wicked purposes, induce men to prefer a guinea to a pound of wages. But, after all, there is something in the demand for fair play and for the means of leading decent lives, which requires a better answer. It is easy, again, to say that all Socialists are Utopian. Make every man equal to-day, and the old inequalities will reappear to-morrow. Pitch such a one over London Bridge, it was said, with nothing on but his breeches, and he will turn up at Woolwich with his pockets full of gold. It is as idle to try for a dead level, when you work with such heterogeneous materials, as to persuade a homogeneous fluid to stand at anything but a dead level. But surely it may be urged that this is as much a reason for declining to believe that equal conditions of life will produce mere monotony, as for insisting that equality in any state is impossible. The present system includes a plan for keeping the scum at

the surface. One of the few lessons which I have learnt from life, and not found already in copy-books, is the enormous difficulty which a man of the respectable classes finds in completely ruining himself, even by vice, extravagance, and folly; whereas, there are plenty of honest people who, in spite of economy and prudence, can scarcely keep outside of the workhouse. Admitting the appeal to justice, it is, again, often urged that justice is opposed to the demand for equality. Property is sacred, it is said, because a man has (or ought to have) a right to what he has made either by labour or by a course of fair dealings with other men. I am not about to discuss the ultimate ground on which the claim to private property is justified, and, as I think, satisfactorily established. A man has a right, we say, to all that he has fairly earned. Has he, then, a right to inherit what his father has earned? A man has had the advantage of all that a rich father can do for him in education, and so forth. Why should he also have the father's fortune, without earning it? Are the merits of making money so great that they are transmissible to posterity? Should a man who has been so good as to become rich, be blessed even to the third and fourth generation? Why, as a matter of pure justice, should not all fortunes be applied to public uses, on the death of the man who made them? Such a law,

however impolitic, would not be incompatible with the moral principle to which an appeal is made. There are, of course, innumerable other ways in which laws may favour an equality of property, without breaking any of the fundamental principles. What, for example, is the just method of distributing taxation? A rich man can not only pay more money than a poor man, in proportion to his income, but he can, with equal ease, pay a greater proportion. To double the income of a labourer may be to raise him from starvation to comfort. To double the income of a millionaire may simply be to encumber him with wealth by which he is unable to increase his own pleasure. There is a limit beyond which it is exceedingly difficult to find ways of spending money on one's own enjoyment—though I have never been able to fix it precisely. On this ground, such plans as a graduated income-tax are, it would seem, compatible with the plea of justice; and, within certain limits, we do, in fact, approve of various taxes, on the ground, real or supposed, that they tend to shift burdens from the poor to the rich, and, so far, to equalise wealth. In fact, this appeal to justice is a tacit concession of the principle. If we justify property on the ground that it is fair that a man should keep what he has earned by his own labour, it seems to follow that it is unjust that he should have anything not earned by

his labour. In other words, the answer admits the ordinary first principle from which Socialism starts, and which, in some Socialist theories, it definitely tries to embody.

All that I have tried to do, so far, is to show that the bare doctrine of equality, which is in some way connected with the demand for justice, is not, of necessity, either unjust or impracticable. It may be used to cover claims which are unjust, to sanction bare confiscation, to take away motives for industry, and, briefly, may be a demand of the drones to have an equal share of the honey. From the bare abstract principle of equality between men, we can, in my own opinion, deduce nothing; and, I do not think that the principle can itself be established. That is why it is made a first principle, or, in other words, one which is not to be discussed. The French revolutionists treated it in this way as *à priori* and self-evident. No school was in more deadly opposition to such *à priori* truths than the school of Bentham and the utilitarians. Yet, Bentham's famous doctrine, that in calculating happiness each man is to count for one, and nobody for more than one, seems to be simply the old principle in a new disguise. James Mill applied the doctrine to politics. J. S. Mill again applied it, with still more thoroughness, especially in his doctrine of representation and of the

equality of the sexes. Accordingly, various moralists have urged that this was an inconsistency in utilitarian doctrine, implying that they, too, could make *à priori* first principles when they wanted them. It has become a sort of orthodox dogma with radicals, who do not always trouble themselves about a philosophical basis, and is applied with undoubting confidence to many practical political problems. "One man, one vote" is not simply the formulation of a demand, but seems to intimate a logical ground for the demand. If, in politics, one man is rightfully entitled to one vote, is it not also true that, in economics, one man should have a right to one income, or, that money, like political power, should be distributed into precisely equal shares? Yet, why are we to take for granted the equality of men in the sense required for such deductions? Since men are not equally qualified for political power, it would seem better *primâ facie* that each man should have the share of power and wealth which corresponds to his powers of using, or, perhaps, to his powers of enjoying. Why should we not say, "To each man according to his deserts"? One practical reason, of course, is the extreme difficulty of saying what are the deserts, and how they are to be ascertained. Undoubtedly, equality is the shortest and simplest way; but, if we take it merely as the most convenient

assumption, it loses its attractive appearance of abstract justice or *à priori* self-certainty. Do a common labourer and Mr. Gladstone deserve the same share of voting power? If not, how many votes should Mr. Gladstone possess to give him his just influence? To ask such questions is to show that answering is impossible, though political theorists have, now and then, tried to put together some ostensible pretext for an answer.

What, let us ask, is the true relation between justice and equality? A judge, to take the typical case, is perfectly just when he ascertains the facts by logical inferences from the evidence, and then applies the law in the spirit of a scientific reasoner. Given the facts, what is the rule under which they come? To answer that question, generally speaking, is his whole duty. In other words, he has to exclude all irrelevant considerations, such as his own private interests or affections. The parties are to be to him merely A and B, and he has to work out the result as an arithmetician works out a sum. Among the irrelevant considerations are frequently some moral aspects of the case. A judge, for example, decides a will to be valid or invalid without asking whether the testator acted justly or unjustly in a moral sense, but simply whether his action was legal or illegal. He cannot go behind the law, even from motives of

benevolence or general maxims of justice, without being an unjust judge. Cases may arise, indeed, as I must say in passing, in which this is hardly true. A law may be so flagrantly unjust that a virtuous judge would refuse to administer it. One striking case was that of the fugitive slave law in the United States, where a man had to choose between acting legally and outraging humanity. So we consider a parent unjust who does not leave his fortune equally among his children. Unless there should be some special reason to the contrary, we shall hold him to be unfair for making distinctions out of mere preference of one child to another. Yet in the case of primogeniture our opinion would have to be modified. Supposing, for example, a state of society in which primogeniture was generally recognised as desirable for public interests, we could hardly call a man unjust for leaving his estates to his eldest son. If, in such a state, a man breaks the general rule, our judgment of his conduct would be determined perhaps by considering whether he was before or behind his age, whether he was acting from a keener perception of the evils of inequality or actuated by spite or regardless of the public interests which he believed to be concerned. A parent treats his children equally in his will in regard to money; but he does not, unless he is a fool, give the same

training or the same opening to all his children, whether they are stupid or clever, industrious or idle. But what I wish to insist upon is, that justice implies essentially indifference to irrelevant considerations, and therefore, in many cases, equality in the treatment of the persons concerned. A judge has to decide without reference to bribes, and not be biassed by the position of an accused person. In that sense he treats the men equally, but of course he does not give equal treatment to the criminal and innocent, to the rightful and wrongful claimant.

The equality implied in justice is therefore to be understood as an exclusion of the irrelevant, and thus supposes an understanding as to what is irrelevant. It is not a mere abstract assertion of equality; but the assertion that, in a given concrete case, a certain rule is to be applied without considering anything outside of the rule. An ideally perfect rule would contain within itself a sufficient indication of what is to be relevant. All men of full age, sound mind, and so forth, are to be treated in such and such a way. Then all cases falling within the rule are to be decided on the same principles, and in that sense equally. But the problem remains, what considerations should be taken into account by the rule itself? Let us put the canon of equality in a different

shape, namely, that there should always be a sufficient reason for any difference in the treatment of our fellows. This rule does not imply that I should act in all cases as though all men were equal in character or mind, but that my action should in all cases be justified by some appropriate consideration. It does not prove that every man should have a vote, but that if one man has a vote and another has not, there should be some adequate reason for the difference. It does not prove that every man should work eight hours a day and have a shilling an hour; but that differences of hours or of pay and, equally, uniformity of hours and pay, should have some sufficient justification. This is a deeper principle, which in some cases justifies and in others does not justify the rule of equality. The rule of equality follows from it under certain conditions, and has gained credit because, in point of fact, those conditions have often been satisfied.

The revolutionary demand for equality was, historically speaking, a protest against arbitrary inequality. It was a protest against the existence of privileges accompanied by no duties. When the rich man could only answer the question, "What have you done to justify your position?" by the famous phrase of Beaumarchais, "I took the trouble to be born," he was obviously in a false position.

The demand for a society founded upon reason, in this sense that a sufficient reason should be given for all differences, was, it seems to me, perfectly right; and, moreover, was enough to condemn the then established system. But when this demand has been so constructed as to twist a logical rule, applicable to all scientific reasoning, into a dogmatic assertion that certain concrete beings were in fact equal, and to infer that they should have equal rights, it ceased to be logical at all, and has been a fruitful parent of many fallacies. Reasonable beings require a sufficient reason for all differences of conduct, for the difference between their treatment of a man and a monkey or a white man and a black, as well as for differences between treatment of rich and poor or wise men and fools; and there must, as the same principle implies, be also a sufficient reason for treating all members of a given class equally. We have to consider whether, for any given purpose, the differences between human beings and animals, Englishmen and negroes, men and women, are or are not of importance for our purpose. When the differences are irrelevant we neglect them or admit the claim to equality of treatment. But the question as to relevance is not to be taken for granted either way. It would be a very convenient but a very unjustifiable assumption in many cases, as it

might save an astronomer trouble if he assumed that every star was equal to every other star.

The application of this is, I think, obvious. The *à priori* assumption of the equality of men is, in some sense, easily refuted. But the refutation does not entitle us to assume that arbitrary inequality, inequality for which no adequate ground can be assigned, is therefore justifiable. It merely shows that the problem is more complex than has been assumed at first sight. "All men ought to be equal." If you mean equal in natural capacity or character, it is enough to say that what is impossible cannot be. If you propose that the industrious and idle, the good and bad, the wise and foolish, should share equally in social advantages, the reply is equally obvious, that such a scheme, if possible, would be injurious to the qualities on which human welfare depends. If you say that men should be rewarded solely according to their intrinsic merits, we must ask, do you mean to abstract from the adventitious advantages of education, social surroundings, and so forth, or to take men as they actually are, whatever the circumstances to which their development is owing? To ask what a man would have been had he been in a different position from his youth, is to ask for an impossible solution, and one, moreover, of no practical bearing. I shall

not employ a drunkard if I am in want of a butler, whether he has become a drunkard under overpowering temptation or become a drunkard from inherited dipsomania. But if, on the other hand, I take the man for what he is, without asking how he has come to be what he is, I leave the source at least of all the vast inequalities of which we complain. The difficulty, which I will not try to develop further, underlies, as I think, the really vital difference of method by which different schools attempt to answer the appeal for social justice.

The school of so-called individualists finds, in fact, that equality in their sense is incompatible with the varied differences due to the complete growth of the social structure. They look upon men simply as so many independent units of varying qualities, no doubt, but still capable of being considered for political and social purposes as equal. They ask virtually what justice would demand if we had before us a crowd of independent applicants for the good things of the world, and the simplest answer is to distribute the good things equally. If it is replied that the idle and the industrious should not be upon the same footing, they are ready to agree, perhaps, that men should be rewarded according to their services to society, however difficult it may be to arrange the proportions. But it soon appears that

the various classes into which society is actually divided imply differences not due to the individual and his intrinsic merits, but to the varying surroundings in which he is placed. To do justice, then, it becomes necessary to get rid of these differences. The extreme case is that of the family. Every one probably owes more to his mother and to his early domestic environment than to any other of the circumstances which have influenced his development. If you and I started as perfectly equal babies, and you have become a saint and I a sinner, the divergence probably began when our mothers watched our cradles, and was made inevitable before we had left their knees. Consequently, the more thorough-going designers of Utopia have proposed to abolish this awkward difference. Men must be different at their birth; but we might conceivably arrange public nurseries which should place them all under approximately equal conditions. Then any differences would result from a man's intrinsic qualities, and he might be said to be rewarded simply according to his own merits.

The plan may be tempting, but has its disadvantages. There are injustices, if we call all inequality injustice, which we can only attribute to nature or to the unknown power which makes men and monkeys, Shakespeares and Stephens. And one result is that

the character and conduct of human beings depend to a great extent upon circumstances, which are accidental in the sense that they are circumstances other than the original endowment of the individual. In this sense, maternal love, for example, is unjust. The mother loves her child because it is her own, not because it is better (though of course it is better) than other children. So, as Adam Smith, I think, observed, we are more moved by our neighbour's suffering from a corn on his great toe than by the starvation of millions in China. In other words, the affections, which are the great moving forces of society, are unjust in so far as they cause us to be infinitely more interested in our own little circle than in the remoter members of humanity known to us only by report. Without discussing the "justice" of this arrangement, we shall have, I think, to admit that it is inevitable. For I, at least, hold that the vague and vast organism of humanity depends for its cohesion upon the affinities and attractions, and not *vice versâ*. My interests are strongest where my power of action is greatest. The love of mothers for children is a force of essential value, and therefore to be cultivated rather than repressed, for no force known to us could replace it. And what is pre-eminently true in this case is, of course, true to a degree in others. Burke stated this with admirable

force in his attack upon the revolutionists who expounded the opposite principle of abstract equality. "To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle," he says, "the germ, as it were, of public affections. It is the first link in the series by which we proceed towards a love to our country and mankind." The assertion that they desired to invert this order, to destroy every social link in so far as it tended to produce inequalities, was the pith of his great indictment against the French "metaphysical" revolutionists. They had perverted the general logical precept of the sufficient reason for all inequalities by converting it into an assuming of the equality of concrete units. They fell into the fallacy of which I have spoken; and many radicals, utilitarians, and others have followed them. They assumed that all the varieties of human character, or all those due to the influence of the social environment, through whose structure and inherited instincts every full-grown man has been moulded, might be safely disregarded for the purpose of political and social construction. They have spoken, in brief, as if men were the equal and homogeneous atoms of physical inquiry and social problems capable of solution by a simple rearrangement of the atoms in different orders, instead of remembering that they are

dealing with a complex organism, in which not only the whole order but every constituent atom is also a complex structure of indefinitely varying qualities. In the recognition of this truth lies, as I believe, the true secret of any satisfactory method of treatment.

Does this fact justify inequality in general? Or does not the principle of equality still remain as essentially implied in the Utopia which we all desire to construct? We have to take it for granted that to each man the first and primary moving instinct is and must be the love of the little "platoon" of which he is a member; that the problem is, not to destroy all these minor attractions, to obliterate the structure and replace society by a vast multitude of independent atoms, each supposed to aim directly at the good of the whole, but so to harmonise and develop or restrain the smaller interests of families, of groups and associations, that they may spontaneously co-operate towards the general welfare. It is a long and difficult task to which we have to apply ourselves; a task not to be effected by the demonstration or application of a single abstract dogma, but to be worked out gradually by the co-operation of many classes and of many generations. If it is fairly solved in the course of a thousand years or so, I for one shall be very fairly satisfied. But distant as the realisation may be, we may or rather ought to con-

sider seriously the end to which we should be working. The conception implies a distinction of primary importance towards any clear treatment of the problem. We have, that is, two different, though not altogether distinct, provinces of what I may, perhaps, call organic and functional morality. We may take the existing order for granted, and ask what is then our duty; or we may ask how far the structure itself requires modification, and, if so, what kind of modification. A man who assumes the existence of the present structure may act justly or unjustly within the limits so prescribed. He must generally be guided in a number of cases by some principle of equality. The judge should endeavour to give the same law to rich and poor; the parent should not make arbitrary distinctions between his children; the statesman should try to distribute his burdens without favouring one particular class, and so forth. A man who, in such a sense, acts justly may be described as up to the level of his age and its accepted established moral ideas, and is, therefore, entitled at least to the negative praise of not being corrupt or dishonest. He fulfils accurately the functions imposed upon him, and is not governed by what Bentham called the sinister interests which would prevent them from being effectually discharged for the welfare of the community. But the

problem which we have to consider is the deeper and more difficult one of organic justice; and our question is what justice means in this case, or what are the irrelevant considerations to be excluded from our motives of conduct.

Between these two classes of justice there are distinctions which it is necessary to state briefly. Justice, as we generally use the word, implies that the unjust man deserves to be hanged, or, at least, is responsible for his actions. What "responsibility" precisely implies is, of course, a debatable question. I only need assume that, in any case, it implies that somebody is guilty of wrong-doing, for which he should receive an appropriate penalty. But in organic questions it is not the individual, but the race which is responsible; and we require a reform, not a penalty. An impatient temper leads us to generalise too hastily from the case of the individual to that of the country. We bestow the blame for all the wrongs of an oppressed nation, for example, upon the nation which oppresses. But in simple point of fact, the oppressed nation generally deserves (if the word can be fairly used) to share the blame. The trodden worm would not have been trodden upon if it had been a bit of a viper. Whatever the duty of turning the second cheek, it is clearly not a national duty. If we admire a Tell or Robert Bruce for

resisting oppressors, we implicitly condemn those who submitted to oppressors. If a nation is divided or wanting in courage, public spirit, and independence, it will be trampled down; and though we may most rightfully blame the trampers, it is idle to exonerate the trampled. It is easy, in the same way, to make the rich solely responsible for all the misery of the poor. The man who has got the booty is naturally regarded as the robber. But, speaking scientifically, that is, with the desire to state the plain facts, we must admit that if the poor are those who have gone to the wall in the struggle for wealth; then, whatever unjust weapons have been used in that struggle, the improvidence and vice and idleness have certainly been among the main causes of defeat. Here, as before, the question is not, who is to be punished? We can only settle that when dealing with individual cases. It is the question, what is the cause of certain evils? and here we must resist the temptation of supposing that the class which in some sense appears to profit by them, or, at least, to be exempt from them, has, therefore, any more to do with bringing them about than the class which suffers from them.

The reflection may put us in mind of what seems to be a general law. The ultimate cause of the adoption of institutions and rules of conduct is often

the fact of their utility to the race; but it is only at a later period that their utility becomes the conscious or avowed reason for maintaining them. The political fabric has been clearly built up, in great part, by purely selfish ambition. Nations have been formed by energetic rulers, who had no eye for anything beyond the gratification of their own ambition, although they were clear-headed enough to see that their own ambition could best secure its objects by taking the side of the stronger social forces, and by giving substantial benefit to others. The same holds good pre-eminently of industrial relations. We all know how Adam Smith, sharing the philosophical optimism of his time, showed how the pursuit of his own welfare by each man tended, by a kind of pre-ordained harmony, to contribute to the welfare of all. Since his time we have ceased to be so optimistic, and have recognised the fact that the building up of modern industrial systems has involved much injury to large classes. And yet we may, I think, in great measure adopt his view. The fact that each man was rogue enough to think first of himself and of his own wife and family is not a proof or a presumption that he did not flourish because, in point of fact, he was contributing (quite unintentionally perhaps) to the comforts of mankind in general. What we have to reflect is that, while the bare existence of certain

institutions gives a strong presumption of their utility, there is also a probability that when the utility becomes a conscious aim or a consciously adopted criterion of their advantage, they will require a corresponding modification intended to secure the advantages at a minimum cost of evil.

Premising these remarks as to the meaning of organic justice, we can now come to the question of equality. Justice in its ordinary sense may be regarded from one point of view as the first condition of the efficiency of the social organ. In saying that a judge is just, we imply that he is so far efficiently discharging his part in society—the due application of the law—without reference to irrelevant considerations. He is a machine which rightly parts the sheep and goats—taking the legal definition of goats and sheep—instead of putting some goats into the sheepfold, and *vice versa*. That is, he secures the accurate application of the purely legal rule. Organic justice involves an application of the same principle because it equally depends upon the exclusion of irrelevant considerations. It implies such a distribution of functions and of maintenance as may secure the greatest possible efficiency of society towards some end in itself good. Society of course may be organised with great efficiency for bad or doubtful ends. A purely military organisation, how-

ever admirable for its purpose, may imply a sacrifice of the highest welfare of the nation. Assuming, however, the goodness of the end, the greatest efficiency is of course desirable. We may, for our purposes, assume that the efficiency of a nation regarded as a society for the production of wealth is a desirable end. There are, of course, many other purposes which must not be sacrificed to the production of wealth. But power of producing wealth, meaning roughly whatever contributes to the physical support and comfort of the nation, is undoubtedly a necessary condition of all other happiness. If we all starve we can have neither art nor science nor morality. What I mean, therefore, is that a nation is so far better as it is able to raise all necessary supplies with the least expenditure of labour, leaving aside the question how far the superfluous forces should be devoted to raising comparative luxuries or to some purely religious or moral or intellectual purposes. The perfect industrial organisation is, I shall assume, compatible with or rather a condition of a perfect organisation of other kinds. In the most general terms we have to consider what are the principles of social organisation, which of course implies a certain balance between the various organs and a thorough nutrition of all, while yet we may for a moment confine our attention to the purely industrial

or economic part of the question. How, if at all, does the principle of equality or of social justice enter the problem?

We may assume, in the the first place, from this point of view, that one most obvious condition is the absence of all purely useless structures, whether of the kind which we call "survivals" or such as may be called parasitic growths. The organ which has ceased to discharge corresponding functions is simply a drag upon the vital forces. When a class, such as the old French aristocracy, ceases to perform duties while retaining privileges, it will be removed,—too probably, as in that case, it will be removed by violent and mischievous methods,—if the society is to grow in vigour. The individuals, as I have said, may or may not deserve punishment, for they are not personally responsible for the general order of things; but they are not unlikely to incur severe penalties, and what we should really hope is that they may be in some way absorbed by judicious medical treatment, instead of extirpated by the knife. At the other end of the scale, we have the parasitic class of the beggars or thieves. They, too, are not personally responsible for the conditions into which they are born. But they are not only to be pitied individually, but to be regarded, in the mass, as involving social disease and danger. More words upon that topic are quite super-

fluous, but I may just recall the truth that the two evils are directly connected. We hear it often said, and often denied, that the rich are growing richer and the poor poorer. So far, however, as it is true, it is one version of the very obvious fact that where there are many careless rich people, there will be the best chance for the beggars. The thoughtless expenditure of the rich without due responsibilities, provides the steady stream of so-called charity,—the charity which, as Shakespeare (or somebody else) observes, is twice cursed, which curses him that gives and him that receives; which is to the rich man as a mere drug to still his conscience and offer a spurious receipt in full for his neglect of social duties, and to the poor man an encouragement to live without self-respect, without providence, a mere hanger-on and dead-weight upon society, and a standing injury and source of temptation to his honest neighbours.

Briefly, a wholesome social condition implies that every social organ discharges a useful function; it renders some service to the community which is equivalent to the support which it derives; brain and stomach each get their due share of supply; and there is a thorough reciprocity between all the different members of the body. But what kind of equality should be desired in order to secure this desirable organic balance? We have to do, I may remark,

with the case of a homogeneous race. By this I mean not only that there is no reason to suppose that there is any difference between the innate qualities of rich and poor, but that there is the strongest reason for believing in an equality; that is to say, more definitely, that if you took a thousand poor babies and a thousand rich babies, and subjected them to the same conditions, they would show great individual differences, but no difference traceable to the mere difference of class origin. I therefore may leave aside such problems as might arise in the Southern States of America, or even in British India, where two different races are in presence; or, again, the case of the sexes, where we cannot assume as self-evident, that the organic differences are irrelevant to political or social ends. So far as we are concerned, we may take it for granted that the differences which emerge are not due to any causes antecedent to and overriding the differences due to different social positions. If we can say justly (as has been said) that a poor man is generally more charitable in proportion to his means, or, again, that he is, as a rule, a greater liar or a greater drunkard than the rich man, the difference is not due to a difference of breed, but to the education (in the widest sense) which each has received. So long as that difference remains, we must take account of it for purposes of obtaining the maximum effi-

ciency. We must not make the poor man a professor of mathematics, or even manager of a railway, because he has talents which, if trained, would have qualified him for the post; but we may and must assume that an equal training would do as much for the poor man as for the rich; and the question is, how far it is desirable or possible to secure such equality.

Now, from the point of view of securing a maximum efficiency, it seems to be a clearly desirable end that the only qualities which should indisputably help to determine a man's position in life, should also be those which determine his fitness for working in it efficiently. In Utopia, it should be the rule that each man shall do what he can do best. If one man is a gamekeeper and another a prime minister, it should be because one has the gifts of a gamekeeper and the other the gifts of a prime minister: whereas, in the actual state, as we all know, the gamekeeper often becomes the prime minister, while the potential prime minister is limited to looking after poachers. But I also urge that we must take into account the actual and not the potential qualities at any given moment. The inequality may be obviated by raising the grade of culture in all classes; but we must not assume that there is an actual equality where, in fact, there is the widest

possible difference. In short, I assert that it is our duty to try to make men equal; though I deny that we are clearly justified in assuming an equality. By making them equal, I do not, of course, mean that we should try to make them all alike. I recognise, with Mill and every sensible writer on the subject, that such a consummation represents rather a danger than an advantage. I wish to see individuality strengthened, not crushed, to encourage men to develop the widest possible diversity of tastes, talents, and pursuits, and to attain unity of opinion, not by a calm assumption that this or that creed is true, but by encouraging the sharpest and freest collision of opinions. The equality of which I speak is that which would result, if the distinction into organs were not of such a nature as to make one class more favourable than another to the full development of whatever character and talents a man may possess. In other words, the distribution into classes would correspond purely and simply to the telling off of each man to the duties which he is best fitted to discharge. The position into which he is born, the class surroundings which determine his development, must not carry with them any disqualification for his acquiring the necessary aptitude for any other position. It was, I think, Fourier who argued that a man ought to be paid more highly for being a chimney-

sweep than for being a prime minister, because the duties of a sweep are the more disagreeable,—a position which some prime ministers may, perhaps, see reason to doubt. My suggestion is, that in Utopia every human being would be so placed as to be capable of preparing himself for any other position, and should then go to the work for which he is best fitted. The equality as thus defined would, I submit, leave no room for a sense of injustice, because the qualities which determine a man's position would be the qualities for which he deserves the position, desert in this sense being measurable by fitness. Discontent with class distinctions must arise so long as a man feels that his position in a class limits and cramps his capacities below the level of happier fortunes. Discontent is not altogether a bad thing, for it is often an *alias* for hope; remove all discontent and you remove all guarantee for improvement. But discontent is of the malignant variety when it is allied with a sense of injustice; that is, of restrictions imposed upon one class for no assignable reason. The only sufficient reason for classes is the efficient discharge of social functions. The differences between the positions of men in social strata, supply some of the most effective motives for the struggle of life; and the effort of men to rise into the wealthy or the powerful class is not likely to cease so long as

men are men; but they take an unworthy form so long as the ambition is simply to attain privileges unconnected with or disproportioned to the duties involved, and which therefore generate hatred to the social structure. If a class could be simply an organ for the discharge of certain functions, and each man in the whole body politic able to fit himself for that class, the injustice, and therefore the malignant variety of discontent, would disappear. Of course, I am speaking only of justice. I do not attempt to define the proper ends of society, or regard justice in itself as a sufficient guarantee for all desirable results. Such justice may exist even in a savage tribe or a low social type. There may be a just distribution of food among a shipwrecked crew, but the attainment of such justice would not satisfy all their wants. The abolition of misery, the elevation of a degraded class to a higher stage is a good thing in itself, unless it can be shown to involve some counterbalancing evil. I only argue that the ideal society would have this, among other attributes, and, therefore, that to secure such equality is a legitimate object of aspiration.

I am speaking of "Utopia". The time is indefinitely distant when a man will choose to be a sweep or a prime minister according to his aptitudes, and be equally able to learn his trade whether he is the son of a prime minister or a sweep. I only try to

indicate the goal to which our efforts should be directed. But the goal thus defined implies methods different from that of some advocates of equality. They propose at once to assume the non-existence of a disagreeable difficulty, and to take men as equal in a sense in which they are not, in fact, equal. To me the problem appears to be, not the instant introduction of a new system, but a necessarily long and very gradual process of education directed towards the distant goal of making men equal in the desirable sense; and that problem, I add, is in the main a moral problem. It is idle to make institutions without making the qualities by which they must be worked. I do not say—far from it—that we are not to propose what may roughly be called external changes: new regulations and new forms of association, and so forth. On the contrary, I believe, as I have intimated, that this method corresponds to the normal order of development. The new institution protects and stimulates the germs of the moral instincts by which it must be worked. But I also hold that no mere rearrangement does any permanent good unless it calls forth a corresponding moral change, and, moreover, that the moral change, however slow and imperceptible, does incomparably more than any external change.

If we assume our present institutions to be per-

manent, a slight improvement in moral qualities, a growth of sobriety, of chastity, of prudence and intellectual culture, would make an almost indefinite improvement in the condition of the masses. If, for example, Englishmen ceased to drink, every English home might be made reasonably comfortable. The two kinds of change imply each other; but it is the most characteristic error of the designers of Utopias to suppose a mere change of regulations without sufficiently attending to the moral implication. To attain equality, as I have tried to define the word, would imply vast moral changes, and therefore a long and difficult elaboration. We have not simply to make men happy, as they now count happiness, but to alter their views of happiness. The good old copy-books tell us that happiness is as common in poor men's huts as in rich men's palaces. We are apt to reply that the statement is a mockery and a lie. But it points to the consummation which in some simple social states has been partly realised, and which in some distant future may come to be an expression of facts. It is conceivable surely that rich men may some day find that there are modes of occupation which are more interesting as well as more useful than accumulation of luxuries or the keeping of horses for the turf; that, in place of propitiating fate by supporting the institution of

beggary, there is an indefinite field for public-spirited energy in the way not of throwing crumbs to Lazarus, but of promoting national culture of mind, of spirit, and of body; that benevolence does not mean simple self-sacrifice, except to the selfish, but the pursuit of a noble and most interesting career; that men's duty to their children is not to enable them to lead idle lives, but to fit them for playing a manly part in the great game of life; and that their relation to those whom they employ is not that of persons exploiting the energies of inferior animals, but of leaders of industry with a common interest in the prosperity of their occupation. People, no doubt, will hardly pursue business from motives of pure benevolence to others, and I do not think it desirable that they should. But the recognition that the pursuit of an honourable business is useful to others may, nevertheless, guide their energies, make the mere scramble for wealth disreputable, and induce them to labour for solid and permanent advantages. Such moral changes are, I conceive, necessary conditions of the equality of which I have spoken; they must be brought about to some extent if the industrial organism is to free itself from the injustice necessarily implied in a mere blind struggle for personal comfort.

Moreover, however distant the final consummation

may be, there are, I think, many indications of an approximation. Nothing is more characteristic of modern society than the enormous development of the power of association for particular purposes. In former days a society had to form an independent organ, a corporation, a college, and so forth, to discharge any particular function, and the resulting organ was so distinct as to absorb the whole life of its members. The work of the fellow was absorbed in the corporate life of his corporation, and he had no distinct personal interests. Now we are all members of societies by the dozen, and society is constantly acquiring the art of forming associations for any purpose, temporary or permanent, which imply no deep structural division, and unite people of all classes and positions. As the profounder lines are obliterated, the tendency to form separate castes, defended by personal privileges, and holding themselves apart from other classes, rapidly diminishes; and the corresponding prejudices are in process of diminution. But I can only hint at this principle.

A correlative moral change in the poor is, of course, equally essential. America is described by Mr. Lowell in the noblest panegyric ever made upon his own country, as "She that lifts up the manhood of the poor". She has taken some rather queer

methods of securing that object lately; yet, however imperfect the result, every American traveller will, I believe, sympathise with what Mr. Bryce has recently said in his great book. America is still the land of hope—the land where the poor man's horizon is not bounded by a vista of inevitable dependence on charity; where—in spite of some superficially grotesque results—every man can speak to every other without the oppressive sense of condescension; where a civil word from a poor man is not always a covert request for a gratuity and a tacit confession of dependence. “Alas,” says Wordsworth, in one of his pregnant phrases, “the gratitude of men has oftener left me mourning” than their cold-heartedness; because, I presume, it is a painful proof of the rarity of kindness. When one man can only receive a gift and another can only bestow it as a payment on account of a long accumulation of the arrears of class injustice, the relations hardly admit of genuine gratitude on either side. What grates most painfully upon me, and, I suppose, upon most of us, is the “servility” of man; the acceptance of a beggar's code of morals as natural and proper for any one in a shabby coat. The more prominent evil just now, according to conservatives and pessimists, is the correlative one of the beggar on horseback; of the man who has found out that he can squeeze

more out of his masters, and uses his power even without considering whether it is wise to drain your milch cow too exhaustively.

A hope of better things is encouraged by schemes for arbitration and conciliation between employers and employed. But we require a moral change if arbitration is to imply something more than a truce between natural enemies, and conciliation to be something different from that employed by Hood's butcher when, after hauling a sheep by main force into the slaughter-house, he exclaimed, “There, I've conciliated *him!*” The only principle on which arbitration can proceed is that the profits should be divided in such a way as to be a sufficient inducement to all persons concerned to give their money or their labour, mental or physical, to promote the prosperity of the business at large. But the reconciliation can only be complete when the capitalist is capable of employing his riches with enough public spirit and generosity to disarm mere envy by his obvious utility, and the poor man justifies his increased wages by his desire to secure permanent benefits and a better standard of life. In Utopia, the question will still be, what plan shall be a sufficient inducement to the men who co-operate as employers or labourers, but the inducement will appeal to better motives, and the positions be so far equalised that

each will be most tolerable to the man best fitted for it.

Here a vast series of problems opens about which I can only suggest the briefest hint. The principle I now urge is the old one, namely, that the usual mark of a quack remedy is the neglect of the moral aspect of a question. We want a state of opinion in which the poor are not objects to be slobbered over, but men to help in a manly struggle for moral as well as material elevation. A great deal is said, for example, about the evils of competition. It is remarkable indeed that few proposals for improvement even, so far as I can discover, tend to get rid of competition. Co-operation, as tradesmen will tell us, is not an abolition of competition, but a competition of groups instead of units. "Profit-sharing" is simply a plan by which workmen may take a direct share in the competition carried on by their masters. I do not mention this as any objection to such schemes, for I do not think that competition is an evil. I do not doubt the vast utility of schemes which tend to increase the intelligence and prudence of workmen, and give them an insight into the conditions of successful business. Competition is no doubt bad so far as it means cheating or gambling. But competition is, it seems to me, inevitable so long as we are forced to apply the experimental method in

practical life, and I fail to see what other method is available. Competition means that thousands of people all over the world are trying to find out how they can supply more economically and efficiently the wants of other people, and that is a state of things to which I do not altogether object. Equality in my sense implies that every one should be allowed to compete for every place that he can fill. The cry is merely, as it seems to me, an evasion of the fundamental difficulty. That difficulty is not that people compete, but that there are too many competitors; not that a man's seat at the table has to be decided by fair trial of his abilities, but that there is not room enough to seat everybody. Malthus brought to the front the great stumbling-block in the way of Utopian optimism. His theory was stated too absolutely, and his view of the remedy was undoubtedly crude. But he hit the real difficulty; and every sensible observer of social evils admits that the great obstacle to social improvement is that social residuum, the parasitic class, which multiplies so as to keep down the standard of living, and turns to bad purposes the increased power of man over nature. We have abolished pestilence and famine in their grimmest shape; if we have not abolished war, it no longer involves usurpation or slavery or the permanent desolation of the conquered; but one

result is just this, that great masses can be regularly kept alive at the lowest stage of existence without being periodically swept away by a "black death" or a horde of brutal invaders. If we choose to turn our advantages to account in this way, no nostrums will put an end to poverty; and the evil can only be met—as I venture to assume—by an elevation of the moral level, involving all that is implied in spreading civilisation downward.

The difficulty shows itself in discussions of the proper sphere of government. Upon that vast and most puzzling topic I will only permit myself one remark. In former times the great aim of reformers was the limitation of the powers of government. They came to regard it as a kind of bogey or extra-natural force, which acted to oppress the poor in order to maintain certain personal privileges. Some, like Godwin of the "Political Justice," held that the millennium implied the abolition of government and the institution of anarchy. The early utilitarians held that government might be reformed by placing power in the hands of the subjects, who would use it only for their own interests, but still retained the prejudices engendered in their long struggle against authority, and held that its functions should still be gradually restricted on pain of developing a worse tyranny than the old. The government has been

handed over to the people as they desired, but with the natural result that the new authorities not only use it to support their interests, but retain the conviction of its extra-natural, or perhaps supernatural, efficacy. It is regarded as an omnipotent body which can not only say (as it can) that whatever it pleases shall be legal, but that whatever is made a law in the juridical sense shall at once become a law of nature. Even their individualist opponents, who profess to follow Mr. Herbert Spencer, seem often to regard the power of government, not as one result of evolution, but as something external which can constrain and limit evolution. It corresponds to a kind of outside pressure which interferes arbitrarily with the so-called natural course of development, and should therefore be abolished. To me, on the contrary, it seems that government is simply one of the social organs, with powers strictly limited by its relation to others and by the nature of the sentiment upon which it rests. There are obvious reasons, in the centralisation of vast industrial interests, the "integration," as Mr. Spencer calls it, which is the correlative of differentiation, in the growing solidarity of different classes and countries, in the consequent growth of natural monopolies, which give a solid reason for believing that the functions of the central government may require expansion. To decide by

any *à priori* principle what should be the limits of this expansion is, to my mind, hopeless. The problem is one to be worked out by experiment,—that is, by many generations and by repeated blundering. A fool, said Erasmus Darwin, is a man who never makes an experiment; an experiment is a new mode of action which fails in its object ninety-nine times out of a hundred; therefore, wise men make more blunders, though they also make more discoveries than fools. Now, experiments in government and social organisation are as necessary to improvement as any other kind of experiment, and probably still more liable to failure. One thing, however, is again obvious. The simple remedy of throwing everything upon government, of allowing it to settle the rate of wages, the hours of labour, the prices of commodities, and so forth, requires for success a moral and intellectual change which it is impossible to overestimate. I will not repeat the familiar arguments which, to my mind, justify this statement. It is enough to say that there is no ground in the bare proposal for putting all manner of industrial regulations into the hands of government, for supposing that it would not drag down every one into pauperism instead of raising everybody to comfort. I often read essays of which the weakness seems to be that while they purpose to establish equality, they give no real

reason for holding that it would not be an equality of beggary. If every one is to be supported, idle or not, the natural conclusion is universal pauperism. If people are to be forced to work by government, or their numbers to be somehow restricted by government, you throw a stress upon the powers of government which, I will not say, it is impossible that it should bear, but which, to speak in the most moderate terms, implies a complete reconstruction of the intelligence, morality, and conceptions of happiness of human beings. Your government would have to be omniscient and purely benevolent as well as omnipotent, and I confess that I cannot see in the experience of those countries where the people have the most direct influence upon the government, any promise that this state of things will be realised just yet.

Thus, I return to my conclusion,—to my platitude, if you will. Professor Fawcett used to say that he could lay down no rules for the sphere of government influence, except this rule, that no interference would do good unless it helped people to help themselves. I think that the doctrine was characteristic of his good sense, and I fully subscribe to it. I heartily agree that equality in the sense I have given, is a most desirable ideal; I agree that we should do all that in us lies to promote it; I only say that our

aims should be always in consistence with the principle that such equality is only possible and desirable in so far as the lowest classes are lifted to a higher standard, morally as well as physically. Of course, that implies approval of every variety of new institutions and laws, of co-operation, of profit sharing, of boards of conciliation, of educational and other bodies for carrying light into darkness and elevating popular standards of life: but always with the express condition that no such institution is really useful except as it tends to foster a genuine spirit of independence, and to supply the moral improvement without which no outward change is worth a button. This is a truism, you may say. Yet, when I read the proposals to get rid of poverty by summarily ordering people to be equal, or to extirpate pauperism by spending a million upon certain institutions for out-door relief, I cannot help thinking that it is a truism which requires to be enforced. The old Political Economy, you say, is obsolete; meaning, perhaps, that you do not mean to be bothered with its assertions; but the old Economists had their merits. They were among the first who realised the vast importance of deeper social questions; they were the first who tried to treat them scientifically; they were not (I hope) the last who dared to speak unpleasant truths, simply because they believed them and believed in their im-

portance. Perhaps, indeed, they rather enjoyed the practice a little too much, and indulged in it a little too ostentatiously. Yet, I am sure that, on the whole, it was a very useful practice, and one which is now scarcely as common as it should be. People are more anxious to pick holes in their statement of economic laws than to insist upon the essential fact that, after all, there are laws, not "laws" made by Parliament, but laws of nature, which do, and will, determine the production and distribution of wealth, and the recognition of which is as important to human welfare as the recognition of physiological laws to the bodily health. Holding this faith, the old Economists were never tired of asserting what is the fundamental truth of so-called "individualism," that, after all we may say about the social development, the essential condition of all social improvement is not that we should have this or that system of regulations, but that the individual should be manly, self-respecting, doing his duty as well as getting his pay, and deeply convinced that nothing will do any permanent good which does not imply the elevation of the individual in his standards of honesty, independence, and good conduct. We can only say to Lazarus: "You are probably past praying for, and all we can do is to save you from starving, by any means which do not encourage other people to fall

into your weaknesses; but we recognise the right of your class for any and every possible help that can be given towards making men of them, and putting them on their legs by teaching them to stand upright".

May 31. 1895

ETHICS AND THE STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE.

IN his deeply-interesting Romanes lecture, Professor Huxley has stated the opinion that the ethical progress of society depends upon our combating the "cosmic process" which we call the struggle for existence. Since, as he adds, we inherit the "cosmic nature" which is the outcome of millions of years of severe training, it follows that the "ethical nature" may count upon having to reckon with a tenacious and powerful enemy as long as the world lasts. This is not a cheerful prospect. It is, as he admits, an audacious proposal to pit the microcosm against the macrocosm. We cannot help fearing that the microcosm may get the worst of it. Professor Huxley has not fully expanded his meaning, and says much to which I could cordially subscribe. But I think that the facts upon which he relies admit or require an interpretation which avoids the awkward conclusion.

Pain and suffering, as Professor Huxley tells us, are always with us, and even increase in quantity

and intensity as evolution advances. The fact had been recognised in remote ages long before theories of evolution had taken their modern form. Pessimism, from the time of the ancient Hindoo philosophers to the time of their disciple, Schopenhauer, has been in no want of evidence to support its melancholy conclusions. It would be idle to waste rhetoric in the attempt to recapitulate so familiar a position. Though I am not a pessimist, I cannot doubt that there is more plausibility in the doctrine than I could wish. Moreover, it may be granted that any attempt to explain or to justify the existence of evil is undeniably futile. It is not so much that the problem cannot be answered, as that it cannot even be asked in any intelligible sense. To "explain" a fact is to assign its causes—that is, to give the preceding set of facts out of which it arose. However far we might go backwards, we should get no nearer to perceiving any reason for the original fact. If we explain the fall of man by Adam's eating the apple, we are quite unable to say why the apple should have been created. If we could discover a general theory of pain, showing, say, that it implied certain physiological conditions, we shall be no nearer to knowing why those physiological conditions should have been what they are. The existence of pain, in short, is one of the primary data of our

problem, not one of the accidents, for which we can hope in any intelligible sense to account. To give any "justification" is equally impossible. The book of Job really suggests an impossible, one may almost say a meaningless, problem. We can give an intelligible meaning to a demand for justice when we can suppose that a man has certain antecedent rights, which another man may respect or neglect. But this has no meaning as between the abstraction "nature" and the concrete facts which are themselves nature. It is unjust to meet equal claims differently. But it is not "unjust" in any intelligible sense that one being should be a monkey and another a man, any more than that part of me should be a hand and another head. The question would only arise if we supposed that the man and the monkey had existed before they were created, and had then possessed claims to equal treatment. The most logical theologians, indeed, admit that as between creature and creator there can be properly no question of justice. The pot and the potter cannot complain of each other. If the writer of Job had been able to show that the virtuous were rewarded and the vicious punished, he would only have transferred the problem to another issue. The judge might be justified, but the creator would be condemned. How can it be just to place a being where he is certain to

sin, and then to damn him for sinning? That is the problem to which no answer can be given; and which already implies a confusion of ideas. We apply the conception of justice in a sphere where it is not applicable, and naturally fail to get any intelligible answer.

It is impossible to combine the conceptions of God as the creator and God as the judge; and the logical straits into which the attempt leads are represented by the endless free-will controversy. I will not now enter that field of controversy: and I will only indicate what seems to me to be the position which we must accept in any scientific discussion of our problem. Hume, as I think, laid down the true principle when he said that there could be no *à priori* proof of a matter of fact. An *à priori* truth is a truth which cannot be denied without self-contradiction, but there can never be a logical consideration in supposing the non-existence of any fact whatever. The ordinary appeal to the truths of pure mathematics is, therefore, beside the question. All such truths are statements of the precise equivalence of two propositions. To say that there are four things is also to say that there are two pairs of things: to say that there is a plane triangle is also to say that there is a plane trilateral. One statement involves the other, because the difference is not in the thing

described, but in our mode of contemplating it. We, therefore, cannot make one assertion and deny the other without implicit contradiction. From such results, again, is evolved (in the logical sense of evolution) the whole vast system of mathematical truths. The complexity of that system gives the erroneous idea that we can, somehow, attain a knowledge of facts, independently of experience. We fail to observe that even the most complex mathematical formula is simply a statement of an exact equivalence of two assertions; and that, till we know by experience the truth of one statement, we can never infer the truth, in fact, of the other. However elaborate may be the evolutions of mathematical truth, they can never get beyond the germs out of which they are evolved. They are valid precisely because the most complex statement is always the exact equivalent of the simpler, out of which it is constructed. They remain to the end truths of number or truths of geometry. They cannot, by themselves, tell us that things exist which can be counted or which can be measured. The whole claim, however elaborate, still requires its point of suspension. We may put their claims to absolute or necessary truth as high as we please; but they cannot give us by themselves a single fact. I can show, for example, that a circle has an infinite number of properties, all of which are

virtually implied in the very existence of a circle. But that the circle or that space itself exists, is not a necessary truth, but a datum of experience. It is quite true that such truths are not, in one sense, empirical; they can be discovered without any change of experience; for, by their very nature, they refer to the constant element of experience, and are true on the supposition of the absolute changelessness of the objects contemplated. But it is a fallacy to suppose that, because independent of particular experiences, they are, therefore, independent of experience in general.

Now, if we agree, as Huxley would have agreed, that Hume's doctrine is true, if we cannot know a single fact except from experience, we are limited in moral questions, as in all others, to elaborating and analysing our experience, and can never properly transcend it. A scientific treatment of an ethical question, at any rate, must take for granted all the facts of human nature. It can show what morality actually is; what are, in fact, the motives which make men moral, and what are the consequences of moral conduct. But it cannot get outside of the universe and lay down moral principles independent of all influences. I am well aware that in speaking of ethical questions upon this ground, I am exposed to many expressions of metaphysical contempt. I

may hope to throw light upon the usual working of morality; but my theory of the facts cannot make men moral of itself. I cannot hope, for example, to show that immorality involves a contradiction, for I know that immorality exists. I cannot even hope to show that it is necessarily productive of misery to the individual, for I know that some people take pleasure in vicious conduct. I cannot deduce facts from morals, for I must consistently regard morals as part of the observed consequences of human nature under given conditions. Metaphysicians may, if they can, show me a more excellent method. I admit that their language sometimes enables them to take what, in words at least, is a sublimer position than mine. Kant's famous phrase, "Thou must, therefore thou canst," is impressive. And yet, it seems to me to involve an obvious piece of logical juggling. It is quite true that whenever it is my duty to act in a certain way, it must be a possibility; but that is only because an impossibility cannot be a duty. It is not my duty to fly, because I have not wings; and conversely, no doubt, it would follow that *if* it were my duty I must possess the organs required. Thus understood, however, the phrase loses its sublimity, and yet, it is only because we have so to understand it, that it has any plausibility. Admitting, however, that people who differ from me

can use grander language, and confessing my readiness to admit error whenever they can point to a single fact attainable by the pure reason, I must keep to the humbler path. I speak of the moral instincts as of others, simply from the point of view of experience: I cannot myself discover a single truth from the abstract principle of non-contradiction; and am content to take for granted that the world exists as we know it to exist, without seeking to deduce its peculiarities by any high *à priori* road.

Upon this assumption, the question really resolves itself into a different one. We can neither explain nor justify the existence of pain; but, of course, we can ask whether, as a matter of fact, pain predominates over pleasure; and we can ask whether, as a matter of fact, the "cosmic processes" tend to promote or discourage virtuous conduct. Does the theory of the "struggle for existence" throw any new light upon the general problem? I am quite unable to see, for my own part, that it really makes any difference: evil exists; and the question whether evil predominates over good, can only, I should say, be decided by an appeal to experience. One source of evil is the conflict of interests. Every beast preys upon others; and man, according to the old saying, is a wolf to man. All that the Darwinian or any other theory can do is, to enable us to trace the con-

sequences of this fact in certain directions; but it neither creates the fact nor makes it more or less an essential part of the process. It "explains" certain phenomena, in the sense of showing their connection with previous phenomena, but does not show why the phenomena should present themselves at all. If we indulge our minds in purely fanciful constructions, we may regard the actual system as good or bad, just as we choose to imagine for its alternative a better or a worse system. If everybody had been put into a world where there was no pain, or where each man could get all he wanted without interfering with his neighbours, we may fancy that things would have been pleasanter. If the struggle, which we all know to exist, had no effect in preventing the "survival of the fittest," things—so, at least, some of us may think—would have been worse. But such fancies have nothing to do with scientific inquiries. We have to take things as they are and make the best of them.

The common feeling, no doubt, is different. The incessant struggle between different races suggests a painful view of the universe, as Hobbes' natural state of war suggested painful theories as to human nature. War is evidently immoral, we think; and a doctrine which makes the whole process of evolution a process of war must be radically immoral too. The

struggle, it is said, demands "ruthless self-assertion" and the hunting down of all competitors; and such phrases certainly have an unpleasant sound. But in the first place, the use of the epithets implies an anthropomorphism to which we have no right so long as we are dealing with the inferior species. We are then in a region to which such ideas have no direct application, and where the moral sentiments exist only in germ, if they can properly be said to exist at all. Is it fair to call a wolf ruthless because he eats a sheep and fails to consider the transaction from the sheep's point of view? We must surely admit that if the wolf is without mercy he is also without malice. We call an animal ferocious because a man who acted in the same way would be ferocious. But the man is really ferocious because he is really aware of the pain which he inflicts. The wolf, I suppose, has no more recognition of the sheep's feelings than a man has of feelings in the oyster or the potato. For him, they are simply non-existent; and it is just as inappropriate to think of the wolf as cruel, as it would be to call the sheep cruel for eating grass. Are we to say that "nature" is cruel because the arrangement increases the sum of undeserved suffering? That is a problem which I do not feel able to examine; but it is, at least, obvious that it cannot be answered off-hand in the affirmative. To

the individual sheep it matters nothing whether he is eaten by the wolf or dies of disease or starvation. He has to die any way, and the particular way is unimportant. The wolf is simply one of the limiting forces upon sheep, and if he were removed others would come into play. The sheep, left to himself, would still give a practical illustration of the doctrine of Malthus. If, as evolutionists tell us, the hostility of the wolf tends to improve the breed of sheep, to encourage him to think more and to sharpen his wits, the sheep may be, on the whole, the better for the wolf, in this sense at least: that the sheep of a wolfless region might lead a more wretched existence, and be less capable animals and more subject to disease and starvation than the sheep in a wolf-haunted region. The wolf may, so far, be a blessing in disguise.

This suggests another obvious remark. When we speak of the struggle for existence, the popular view seems to construe this into the theory that the world is a mere cockpit, in which one race carries on an interminable struggle with the other. If the wolves are turned in with the sheep, the first result will be that all the sheep will become mutton, and the last that there will be one big wolf with all the others inside him. But this is contrary to the essence of the doctrine. Every race depends, we all hold, upon

its environment, and the environment includes all the other races. If some, therefore, are in conflict, others are mutually necessary. If the wolf ate all the sheep, and the sheep ate all the grass, the result would be the extirpation of all the sheep and all the wolves, as well as all the grass. The struggle necessarily implies reciprocal dependence in a countless variety of ways. There is not only a conflict, but a system of tacit alliances. One species is necessary to the existence of others, though the multiplication of some implies also the dying out of particular rivals. The conflict implies no cruelty, as I have said, and the alliance no goodwill. The wolf neither loves the sheep (except as mutton) nor hates him; but he depends upon him as absolutely as if he were aware of the fact. The sheep is one of the wolf's necessities of life. When we speak of the struggle for existence we mean, of course, that there is at any given period a certain equilibrium between all the existing species; it changes, though it changes so slowly that the process is imperceptible and difficult to realise even to the scientific imagination. The survival of any species involves the disappearance of rivals no more than the preservation of allies. The struggle, therefore, is so far from internecine that it necessarily involves co-operation. It cannot even be said that it necessarily implies suffering. People,

indeed, speak as though the extinction of a race involved suffering in the same way as the slaughter of an individual. It is plain that this is not a necessary, though it may sometimes be the actual result. A corporation may be suppressed without injury to its members. Every individual will die before long, struggle or no struggle. If the rate of reproduction fails to keep up with the rate of extinction, the species must diminish. But this might happen without any increase of suffering. If the boys in a district discovered how to take birds' eggs, they might soon extirpate a species; but it does not follow that the birds would individually suffer. Perhaps they would feel themselves relieved from a disagreeable responsibility. The process by which a species is improved, the dying out of the least fit, implies no more suffering than we know to exist independently of any doctrine as to a struggle. When we use anthropomorphic language, we may speak of "self-assertion". But "self-assertion," minus the anthropomorphism, means self-preservation; and that is merely a way of describing the fact that an animal or plant which is well adapted to its conditions of life is more likely to live than an animal which is ill-adapted. I have some difficulty in imagining how any other arrangement can even be supposed possible. It seems to be almost an identical proposition

that the healthiest and strongest will generally live longest; and the conception of a "struggle for existence" only enables us to understand how this results in certain progressive modifications of the species. If we could ever for a moment have fancied that there was no pain and disease, and that some beings were not more liable than others to those evils, I might admit that the new doctrine has made the world darker. As it is, it seems to me that it leaves the data just what they were before, and only shows us that they have certain previously unsuspected bearings upon the history of the world.

One other point must be mentioned. Not only are species interdependent as well as partly in competition, but there is an absolute dependence in all the higher species between its different members which may be said to imply a *de facto* altruism, as the dependence upon other species implies a *de facto* co-operation. Every animal, to say nothing else, is absolutely dependent for a considerable part of its existence upon its parents. The young bird or beast could not grow up unless its mother took care of it for a certain period. There is, therefore, no struggle as between mother and progeny; but, on the contrary, the closest possible alliance. Otherwise, life would be impossible. The young being defenceless, their parents could exterminate them if they pleased,

and by so doing would exterminate the race. The parental relation, of course, constantly involves a partial sacrifice of the mother to her young. She has to go through a whole series of operations, which strain her own strength and endanger her own existence, but which are absolutely essential to the continuance of the race. It may be anthropomorphic to attribute any maternal emotions of the human kind to the animal. The bird, perhaps, sits upon her eggs because they give her an agreeable sensation, or, if you please, from a blind instinct which somehow determines her to the practice. She does not look forward, we may suppose, to bringing up a family, or speculate upon the delights of domestic affection. I only say that as a fact she behaves in a way which is at once injurious to her own chances of individual survival, and absolutely necessary to the survival of the species. The abnormal bird who deserts her nest escapes many dangers; but if all birds were devoid of the instinct, the birds would not survive a generation.

Now, I ask, what is the difference which takes place when the monkey gradually loses his tail and sets up a superior brain? Is it properly to be described as a development or improvement of the "cosmic process," or as the beginning of a prolonged contest against it?

In the first place, so far as man becomes a reasonable being, capable of foresight and of the adoption of means to ends, he recognises the nature of these tacit alliances. He believes it to be his interest not to exterminate everything, but to exterminate those species alone whose existence is incompatible with his own. The wolf eats every sheep that he comes across as long as his appetite lasts. If there are too many wolves, the process is checked by the starvation of the supernumerary eaters. Man can maintain just as many sheep as he wants, and may also proportion the numbers of his own species to the possibilities of future supply. Many of the lower species thus become subordinate parts of the social organism—that is to say, of the new equilibrium which has been established. There is so far a reciprocal advantage. The sheep that is preserved with a view to mutton gets the advantage, though he is not kept with a view to his own advantage. Of all arguments for vegetarianism, none is so weak as the argument from humanity. The pig has a stronger interest than any one in the demand for bacon. If all the world were Jewish, there would be no pigs at all. He has to pay for his privileges by an early death; but he makes a good bargain of it. He dies young, and, though we can hardly infer the “love of the gods,” we must admit that he gets a superior race of beings

to attend to his comforts, moved by the strongest possible interest in his health and vigour, and induced by its own needs, perhaps, to make him a little too fat for comfort, but certainly also to see that he has a good sty, and plenty to eat every day of his life. Other races, again, are extirpated as “ruthlessly” as in the merely instinctive struggle for existence. We get rid of wolves and snakes as well as we can, and more systematically than can be done by their animal competitors. The process does not necessarily involve cruelty, and certainly does not involve a diminution of the total of happiness. The struggle for existence means the substitution of a new system of equilibrium, in which one of the old discords has been removed, and the survivors live in greater harmony. If the wolf is extirpated as an internecine enemy, it is that there may be more sheep when sheep have become our allies and the objects of our earthly providence. The result may be, perhaps I might say must be, a state in which, on the whole, there is a greater amount of life supported on the planet; and therefore, as those will think who are not pessimists, a decided gain on the balance. At any rate, the difference so far is that the condition which was in all cases necessary, is now consciously recognised as necessary; and that we deliberately aim at a result which always had to be achieved on

penalty of destruction. So far, again, as morality can be established on purely prudential grounds, the same holds good of relations between human beings themselves. Men begin to perceive that, even from a purely personal point of view, peace is preferable to war. If war is unhappily still prevalent, it is at least not war in which every clan is fighting with its neighbours, and where conquest means slavery or extirpation. Millions of men are at peace within the limits of a modern State, and can go about their business without cutting each other's throats. When they fight with other nations they do not enslave nor massacre their prisoners. Starting from the purely selfish ground Hobbes could prove conclusively that everybody benefited by the social compact which substituted peace and order for the original state of war. Is this, then, a reversal of the old state of things—a combating of a “cosmic process”? I should rather say that it is a development of the tacit alliances, and a modification so far of the direct or internecine conflict. Both were equally implied in the older conditions, and both still exist. Some races form alliances, while others are crowded out of existence. Of course, I cease to do some things which I should have done before. I don't attack the first man I meet in the street and take his scalp. One reason is that I don't expect he will take mine; for, if I did, I

fear that, even as a civilised being, I should try to anticipate his intentions. This merely means that we have both come to see that we have a common interest in keeping the peace. And this, again, merely means that the tacit alliance which was always an absolutely necessary condition of the survival of the species has now been extended through a wider area. The species could not have got on at all if there had not been so much alliance as is necessary for its reproduction and for the preservation of its young for some years of helplessness. The change is simply that the small circle which included only the primitive family or class has extended, so that we can meet members of the same nation, or, it may be, of the same race, on terms which were previously confined to the minor group. We have still to exterminate and still to preserve. The mode of employing our energies has changed, but not the essential nature. Morality proper, however, has so far not emerged. It begins when sympathy begins; when we really desire the happiness of others; or, as Kant says, when we treat other men as an end and not simply as a means. Undoubtedly this involves a new principle, no less than the essential principle of all true morality. Still, I have to ask whether it implies a combating or a continuation of a cosmic process. Now, as I have

observed, even the animal mother shows what I have called a *de facto* altruism. She has instincts which, though dangerous to the individual, are essential for the race. The human mother sacrifices herself with a consciousness of the results to herself, and her personal fears are overcome by the strength of her affections. She intentionally endures a painful death to save them from suffering. The animal sacrifices herself, but without foresight of the result, and therefore without moral worth. This is merely the most striking exemplification of the general process of the development of morality. Conduct is first regarded purely with a view to the effects upon the agent, and is therefore enforced by extrinsic penalties, by consequences, that is, supposed to be attached to us by the will of some ruler, natural or supernatural. The instinct which comes to regard such conduct as bad in itself, which implies a dislike of giving pain to others, and not merely a dislike to the gallows, grows up under such probation until the really moralised being acquires feelings which make the external penalty superfluous. This, indubitably, is the greatest of all changes, the critical fact which decides whether we are to regard conduct simply as useful, or also to regard it as moral in the strictest sense. But I should still call it a development and not a reversal of the previous process. The conduct

which we call virtuous is the same conduct externally which we before regarded as useful. The difference is that the simple fact of its utility, that is, of its utility to others and to the race in general, has now become also the sufficient motive for the action as well as the implicit cause of the action. In the earlier stages, when no true sympathy existed, men and animals were still forced to act in a certain way because it was beneficial to others. They now act in that way because they are conscious that it is beneficial to others. The whole history of moral evolution seems to imply this. We may go back to a period at which the moral law is identified with the general customs of the race; at which there is no perception of any clear distinction between that which is moral and that which is simply customary; between that which is imposed by a law in the strict sense and that which is dictated by general moral principles. In such a state of things, the motives for obedience partake of the nature of "blind instincts". No definite reason for them is present to the mind of the agent, and it does not occur to him even to demand a reason. "Our fathers did so and we do so" is the sole and sufficient explanation of their conduct. Thus instinct again may be traced back by evolutionists to the earliest period at which the instincts implied in the relations between the sexes or between

parents and offspring, existed. They were the germ from which has sprung all morality such as we now recognise.

Morality, then, implies the development of certain instincts which are essential to the race, but which may, in an indefinite number of cases, be injurious to the individual. The particular mother is killed because she obeys her natural instincts; but, if it were not for mothers and their instincts, the race would come to an end. Professor Huxley speaks of the "fanatical individualism" of our time as failing to construct morality from the analogy of the cosmic process. An individualism which regards the cosmic process as equivalent simply to an internecine struggle of each against all, must certainly fail to construct a satisfactory morality upon such terms, and I will add that any individualism which fails to recognise fully the social character, which regards society as an aggregate instead of an organism, will, in my opinion, find itself in difficulties. But I also submit that the development of the instincts which directly correspond to the needs of the race, is merely another case in which we aim consciously at an end which was before an unintentional result of our actions. Every race, above the lowest, has instincts which are only intelligible by the requirements of the race; and has both to compete with some and to

form alliances with others of its fellow occupants of the planet. Both in the unmoralised condition and in that in which morality has become most developed, these instincts have common characteristics, and may be regarded as conditions of the power of the race to which they belong to maintain its position in the world, and, speaking roughly, to preserve or increase its own vitality.

I will not pause to insist upon this so far as regards many qualities which are certainly moral, though they may be said to refer primarily to the individual. That chastity and temperance, truthfulness and energy, are, on the whole, advantages both to the individual and to the race, does not, I fancy, require elaborate proof; nor need I argue at length that the races in which they are common will therefore have inevitable advantages in the struggle for existence. Of all qualities which enable a race to hold its own, none is more important than the power of organising individually, politically, and socially, and that power implies the existence of justice and the instinct of mutual confidence—in short, all the social virtues. The difficulty seems to be felt in regard to those purely altruistic impulses, which, at first glance at any rate, make it apparently our duty to preserve those who would otherwise be unfit to live. Virtue, says Professor Huxley, is directed "not so much to

the survival of the fittest," as to the "fitting of as many as possible to survive". I do not dispute the statement, I think it true in a sense; but I have a difficulty as to its application.

Morality, it is obvious, must be limited by the conditions in which we are placed. What is impossible is not a duty. One condition plainly is that the planet is limited. There is only room for a certain number of living beings; and though we may determine what shall be the number, we cannot arbitrarily say that it shall be indefinitely great. It is one consequence that we do, in fact, go on suppressing the unfit, and cannot help going on suppressing them. Is it desirable that it should be otherwise? Should we wish, for example, that America could still be a hunting-ground for savages? Is it better that it should contain a million red men or sixty millions of civilised whites? Undoubtedly the moralist will say with absolute truth that the methods of extirpation adopted by Spaniards and Englishmen were detestable. I need not say that I agree with him, and hope that such methods may be abolished wherever any remnant of them exists. But I say so partly because I believe in the struggle for existence. This process underlies morality, and operates whether we are moral or not. The most civilised race, that which has the greatest knowledge, skill, power of

organisation, will, I hold, have an inevitable advantage in the struggle, even if it does not use the brutal means which are superfluous as well as cruel. All the natives who lived in America a hundred years ago would be dead now in any case, even if they had invariably been treated with the greatest humanity, fairness, and consideration. Had they been unable to suit themselves to new conditions of life, they would have suffered an euthanasia instead of a partial extirpation; and had they suited themselves they would either have been absorbed or become a useful part of the population. To abolish the old brutal method is not to abolish the struggle for existence, but to make the result depend upon a higher order of qualities than those of the mere piratical viking.

Mr. Pearson has been telling us in his most interesting book, that the negro may not improbably hold his own in Africa. I cannot say I regard this as an unmixed evil. Why should there not be parts of the world in which races of inferior intelligence or energy should hold their own? I am not so anxious to see the whole earth covered by an indefinite multiplication of the cockney type. But I only quote the suggestion for another reason. Till recent years the struggle for existence was carried on as between Europeans and negroes by simple violence and brutality. The slave trade and its consequences

have condemned the whole continent to barbarism. That, undoubtedly, was part of the struggle for existence. But, if Mr. Pearson's guess should be verified, the results have been so far futile as well as disastrous. The negro has been degraded, and yet, after all our brutality, we cannot take his place. Therefore, besides the enormous evils to slave-trading countries themselves, the lowering of their moral tone, the substitution of piracy for legitimate commerce, and the degradation of the countries which bought the slaves, the superior race has not even been able to suppress the inferior. But the abolition of this monstrous evil does not involve the abolition but the humanisation of the struggle. The white man, however merciful he becomes, may gradually extend over such parts of the country as are suitable to him; and the black man will hold the rest and acquire such arts and civilisation as he is capable of appropriating. The absence of cruelty would not alter the fact that the fittest race would extend; but it may ensure that whatever is good in the negro may have a chance of development in his own sphere, and that success in the struggle will be decided by more valuable qualities.

Without venturing further into a rather speculative region, I need only indicate the bearing of such considerations upon problems nearer home. It is

often complained that the tendency of modern civilisation is to preserve the weakly, and therefore to lower the vitality of the race. This seems to involve inadmissible assumptions. In the first place, the process by which the weaker are preserved consists in suppressing various conditions unfavourable to human life in general. Sanitary legislation, for example, aims at destroying the causes of many of the diseases from which our forefathers suffered. If we can suppress the smallpox, we of course save many weakly children, who would have died had they been attacked. But we also remove one of the causes which weakened the constitutions of many of the survivors. I do not know by what right we can say that such legislation, or again, the legislation which prevents the excessive labour of children, does more harm by preserving the weak than it does good by preventing the weakening of the strong. One thing is at any rate clear: to preserve life is to increase the population, and therefore to increase the competition; or, in other words, to intensify the struggle for existence. The process is as broad as it is long. If we could be sure that every child born should grow up to maturity, the result would be to double the severity of the competition for support. What we should have to show, therefore, in order to justify the inference of a deteriora-

tion due to this process, would be, not that it simply increased the number of the candidates for living, but that it gave to the feebler candidates a differential advantage; that they are now more fitted than they were before for ousting their superior neighbours from the chances of support. But I can see no reason for supposing such a consequence to be probable or even possible. The struggle for existence, as I have suggested, rests upon the unalterable facts that the world is limited and population elastic. Under all conceivable circumstances we shall still have in some way or other to proportion our numbers to our supplies; and under all circumstances those who are fittest by reason of intellectual or moral or physical qualities will have the best chance of occupying good places, and leaving descendants to supply the next generation. It is surely not less true that in the civilised as much as in the most barbarous race, the healthiest are the most likely to live, and the most likely to be ancestors. If so, the struggle will still be carried on upon the same principles, though certainly in a different shape.

It is true that this suggests one of the most difficult questions of the time. It is suggested, for example, that in some respects the "highest" specimens of the race are not the healthiest or the fittest. Genius, according to some people, is a variety of

disease, and intellectual power is won by a diminution of reproductive power. A lower race, again, if we measure "high" and "low" by intellectual capacity, may oust a higher race, because it can support itself more cheaply, or, in other words, because it is more efficient for industrial purposes. Without presuming to pronounce upon such questions, I will simply ask whether this does not interpret Professor Huxley's remark about that "cosmic nature" which is still so strong, and which is likely to be strong so long as men require stomachs. We have not, I think, to suppress it, but to adapt it to new circumstances. We are engaged in working out a gigantic problem: What is the best, in the sense of the most efficient, type of human being? What is the best combination of brains and stomach? We turn out saints, who are "too good to live," and philosophers, who have run too rapidly to brains. They do not answer in practice, because they are instruments too delicate for the rough work of daily life. They may give us a foretaste of qualities which will be some day possible for the average man; of intellectual and moral qualities, which, though now exceptional, may become commonplace. But the best stock for the race are those in whom we have been lucky enough to strike out the happy combination, in which greater intellectual power is produced without the

loss of physical vigour. Such men, it is probable, will not deviate so widely from the average type. The reconciliation of the two conditions can only be effected by a very gradual process of slowly edging onwards in the right direction. Meanwhile the theory of a struggle for existence justifies us, instead of condemning us, for preserving the delicate child, who may turn out to be a Newton or a Keats, because he will leave to us the advantage of his discoveries or his poems, while his physical feebleness assures us that he will not propagate his race.

This may lead to a final question. Does the morality of a race strengthen or weaken it; fit it to hold its own in the general equilibrium, or make its extirpation by low moral races more probable? I do not suppose that anybody would deny what I have already suggested, that the more moral the race, the more harmonious and the better organised, the better it is fitted for holding its own. But if this be admitted, we must also admit that the change is not that it has ceased to struggle, but that it struggles by different means. It holds its own, not merely by brute force, but by justice, humanity, and intelligence, while, it may be added, the possession of such qualities does not weaken the brute force, where such a quality is still required. The most civilised races are, of course, also the most formidable

in war. But, if we take the opposite alternative, I must ask how any quality which really weakens the vitality of the race can properly be called moral. I should entirely repudiate any rule of conduct which could be shown to have such a tendency. This, indeed, indicates what seems to me to be the moral difficulty with most people. Charity, you say, is a virtue; charity increases beggary, and so far tends to produce a feebler population; therefore, a moral quality tends doubly to diminish the vigour of a nation. The answer is, of course, obvious, and I am confident that Professor Huxley would have so far agreed with me. It is that all charity which fosters a degraded class is therefore immoral. The "fanatical individualism" of to-day has its weaknesses; but in this matter it seems to me that we see the weakness of the not less fanatical "collectivism".

The question, in fact, how far any of the socialistic or ethical schemes of to-day are right or wrong, depends upon our answer to the question how far they tend to produce a vigorous or an enervated population. If I am asked to subscribe to General Booth's scheme, I inquire first whether the scheme is likely to increase or diminish the number of helpless hangers-on upon the efficient part of society. Will the whole nation consist in larger proportions of active and responsible workers, or of people who

are simply burdens upon the real workers? The answer decides not only the question whether it is expedient, but also the question whether it is right or wrong, to support the proposed scheme. Every charitable action is so far a good action that it implies sympathy for suffering; but if it is so much in want of prudence that it increases the evil which it means to remedy, it becomes for that reason a bad action. To develop sympathy without developing foresight is just one of the one-sided developments which fail to constitute a real advance in morality, though I will not deny that it may incidentally lead to an advance.

I hold, then, that the "struggle for existence" belongs to an underlying order of facts to which moral epithets cannot be properly applied. It denotes a condition of which the moralist has to take account, and to which morality has to be adapted; but which, just because it is a "cosmic process," cannot be altered, however much we may alter the conduct which it dictates. Under all conceivable circumstances, the race has to adapt itself to the environment, and that necessarily implies a conflict as well as an alliance. The preservation of the fittest, which is surely a good thing, is merely another aspect of the dying out of the unfit, which is hardly a bad thing. The feast which Nature spreads

before us, according to Malthus's metaphor, is only sufficient for a limited number of guests, and the one question is how to select them. The tendency of morality is to humanise the struggle, to minimise the suffering of those who lose the game; and to offer the prizes to the qualities which are advantageous to all, rather than to those which increase and intensify the bitterness of the conflict. This implies the growth of foresight, which is an extension of the earlier instinct, and enables men to adapt themselves to the future and to learn from the past, as well as to act up to immediate impulse of present events. It implies still more the development of the sympathy which makes every man feel for the hurts of all, and which, as social organisation is closer, and the dependence of each constituent atom upon the whole organisation is more vividly realised, extends the range of a man's interests beyond his own private needs. In that sense, again, it must stimulate "collectivism" at the expense of a crude individualism, and condemns the doctrine which, as Professor Huxley puts it, would forbid us to restrain the member of a community from doing his best to destroy it. To restrain such conduct is surely to carry on the conflict against all anti-social agents or tendencies. For I should certainly hold any form of collectivism to be immoral which denied the essential

doctrine of the abused individualist, the necessity, that is, for individual responsibility. We have surely to suppress the murderer, as our ancestors suppressed the wolf. We have to suppress both the external enemies, the noxious animals whose existence is incompatible with our own, and the internal enemies which are injurious elements in the society itself. That is, we have to work for the same end of eliminating the least fit. Our methods are changed; we desire to suppress poverty, not to extirpate the poor man. We give inferior races a chance of taking whatever place they are fit for, and try to supplant them with the least possible severity if they are unfit for any place. But the suppression of poverty supposes not the confiscation of wealth, which would hardly suppress poverty in the long run, nor even the adoption of a system of living which would enable the idle and the good-for-nothing to survive. The progress of civilisation depends, I should say, on the extension of the sense of duty which each man owes to society at large. That involves such a constitution of society that, although we abandon the old methods of hanging and flogging and shooting down—methods which corrupted the inflictors of punishment by diminishing their own sense of responsibility—may give an advantage to the prudent and industrious, and make it more probable

that they will be the ancestors of the next generation. A system which should equalise the advantages of the energetic and the helpless would begin by demoralising, and would very soon lead to an unprecedented intensification of the struggle for existence. The probable result of a ruthless socialism would be the adoption of very severe means for suppressing those who did not contribute their share of work. But, in any case, as it seems, we never get away or break away from the inevitable fact. If individual ends could be suppressed, if every man worked for the good of society as energetically as for his own, we should still feel the absolute necessity of proportioning the whole body to the whole supplies obtainable from the planet, and to preserve the equilibrium of mankind relatively to the rest of nature. That day is probably distant; but even upon that hypothesis the struggle for existence would still be with us, and there would be the same necessity for preserving the fittest and killing out, as gently as might be, those who were unfit.

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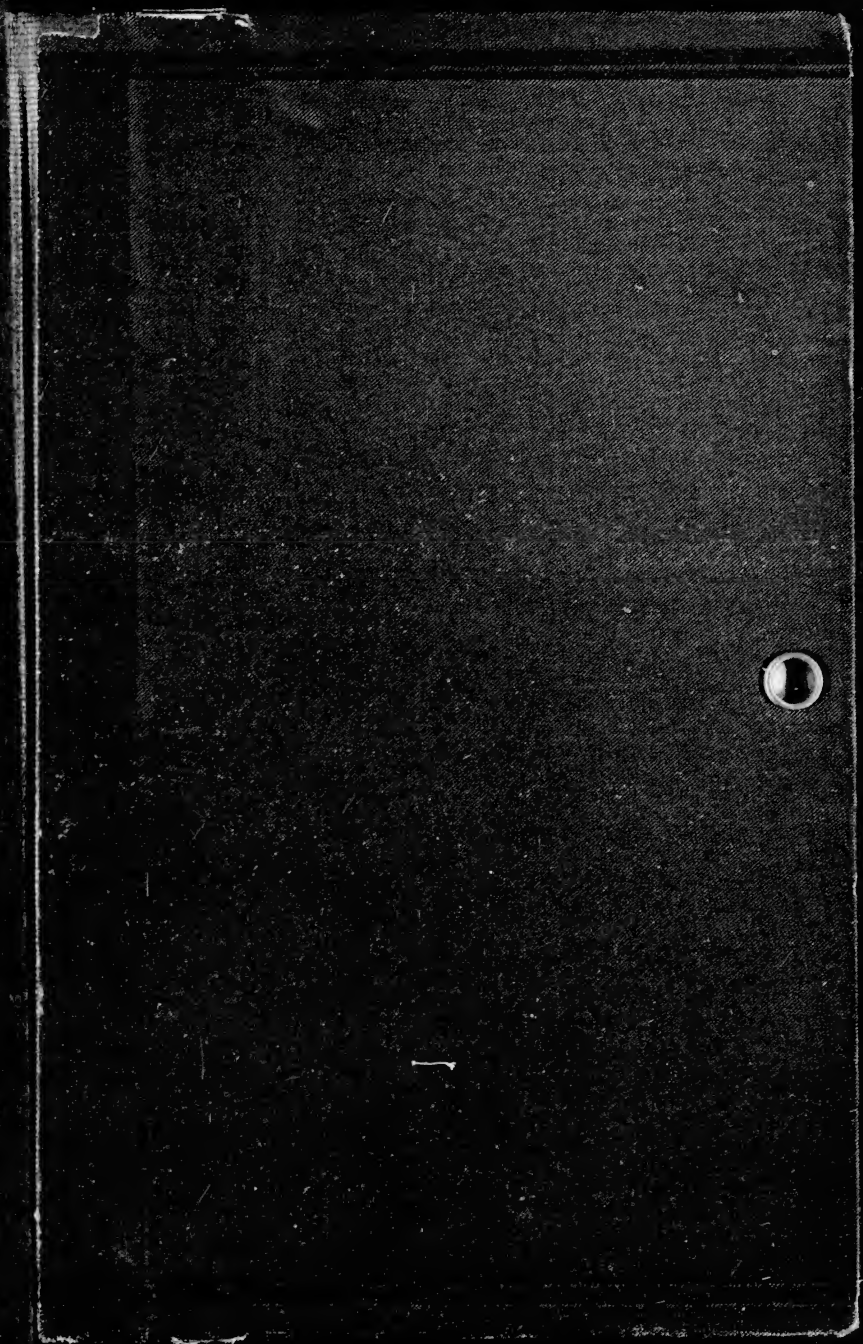
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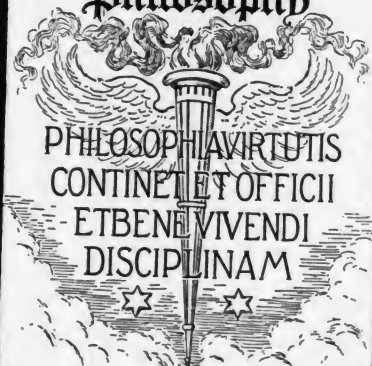
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L. S.

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HEREDITY.

I FOUND, the other day, that an address upon Heredity had been announced, of which I was to be the deliverer. I admit that I was fully responsible for the statement, although, for reasons with which I need not trouble you, I was not quite prepared for it in this form. I mention this fact in order simply to say that the title may possibly give rise to false expectations. I am quite incompetent to express any opinion of the slightest scientific value upon certain problems suggested by that rather ugly word "heredity". The question as to the precise relationship between any organism and its parents or remoter ancestors, is one of the highest interest. The solution, for example, of the problem, whether is it possible for a living being to transmit to its descendants qualities which have only been acquired during its own lifetime, has an important bearing upon the general theory of evolution. But I have nothing whatever to suggest in regard to that problem. I simply take it for granted that there is some relation between parents and children: and a relation, speak-

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ing in the most general way, such that the qualities with which we start in life, resemble more or less closely those of our ancestors. I may also assume that, in some form or other, the doctrine of evolution must be accepted: and that all living things now in the world are the descendants, more or less modified, of the population which preceded them. I proceed to ask whether, as some people appear to believe, the acceptance of this doctrine in the most unqualified form, would introduce any difficulty into our primary ethical conceptions. I will also at once give my answer. I do not believe that it introduces any difficulty whatever. I do believe that the general theory of evolution tends in very important ways to give additional distinctness to certain ethical doctrines; although, to go at all fully into the how and the why would take me beyond my present purpose. All that I have to argue to-day is, that a belief in "heredity" need not be a stumbling-block to any reasonable person.

I cannot doubt that the popular mind is vaguely alarmed by the doctrine. I read, the other day, a novel by a well-known author, of which, so far as I can remember, the main substance was as follows: A virtuous doctor (his virtue had some limitations) studied the problem of heredity, and had read Darwin, and Herbert Spencer, and Weissmann, and all the

proper authorities. His own researches are carefully described, with the apparent assumption that they were both profound and of tremendous significance. He had, it appears, accumulated a vast amount of material; and his method was to cut out slips from newspapers, whenever they recorded any events in his own family history, and to preserve them in a mysterious cabinet. These investigations proved that there was a decided family likeness running through the descendants of a common ancestor. As a general rule, they had all belonged to the class "blackguard". From this result he inferred that there was no God and no soul. His relations were dreadfully scandalised: one was converted to his views; but the others contrived diabolical plots for setting fire to these marvellous collections and so stopping the contagion of these dreadful doctrines at their source. It struck me, I confess, that instead of burning the collections, they would have done better to ask him what was the connection between his premisses and his conclusions. What was this terrible, heart-paralysing truth which the poor man had discovered? Has any human being ever doubted, since mothers were invented, that children are apt to resemble their parents? I do not personally remember the fact, but I should be prepared to bet, if the point could be settled, that, before I was a month

old,—and in those days neither Darwin nor Weissmann had published a line,—my nurse and my mother had affirmed that the baby was like his papa. That, at any rate, is a remark, the omission of which would show more originality than the assertion. If I desired, again, to produce classical authority for the importance of race, I should not have to extend my researches beyond the Latin Grammar. If, once more, we look into the writings of famous theologians, we meet it everywhere. I take the first that comes to hand. “Good men,” says Calvin, “and beyond all others, Augustine, have laboured to demonstrate, that we are not corrupted by any adventitious means but that we derive an innate depravity from our very birth.” The denial of this was an instance of consummate impudence—reserved, as Calvin shows, for such wicked heretics as Pelagius. The doctrine of heredity, in short, in a theological version, is essentially involved in the dogmatic foundations of the orthodox creed. I have no doubt that an investigation of the reasonings of Augustine and others would exhibit much affinity to modern controversy, though in a very different terminology. Whatever we may think of its merits, the doctrine of original sin implies that a depraved nature may have been transmitted to the whole human race; and, if the commonly alleged cause of the original depravity strikes us as insuffi-

cient, it is, at least, a very familiar argument of divines, that the doctrine corresponds to undeniable facts. Why should it startle us in a scientific dress? If we can transmit depravity, why not genius and bodily health? In one respect, modern theories tend rather to limit than to extend the applicability of the principle. No one ever doubted, nor could doubt, that the child of a monkey is always a monkey; and that the child of a negro, or even of a Mongol, has certain characteristics which distinguish it from the child of a European. But the difference is that, whereas it used to be held that there was an impassable barrier between the monkey and the man, it is now widely believed that both may be descendants from a common ancestor. Should this belief establish itself, we shall have to admit that, in spite of heredity, organic forms are capable of much wider variation than was believed by our fathers to be even conceivable.

Let us try, then, to discover some more plausible explanation of the fear excited by the doctrine. Now, I wish to give as wide a berth as possible to that freewill controversy which perplexes so many minds, and is apt to intrude at this point. I will try to assume,—though it is not my own position,—the doctrine of the freedom of the will in the widest sense that any reasonable person can devise. No such

person will deny that there is a close connection—the terms of which have not yet been defined—between the physical constitution and the moral or intellectual character. The man plainly grows out of the baby. If the baby's skull has a certain conformation it can only be an idiot; with another skull and brain it may be developed into a Shakespeare or a Dante. The possibilities ranging between those limits are immovably fixed at birth. And what determines the constitution with which the child is born? Surely it can be nothing but the constitution and circumstances of its parents. Whether I can be a great man, or cannot be more than a commonplace man, or a fool,—nay, whether I shall be man or monkey or an oak,—is settled before I have had any power of volition at all. Now, it is curious how, even at this early period, we are led to use delusive language. The difficulty is quaintly indicated in a remark by Jonathan Swift. The dean "hath often been heard to say" (says a fragment of autobiography) "that he felt the consequences of his parents' marriage, not only through the whole course of his education, but during the greater part of his life". If they had not married, he apparently implies, he would have been born of other parents, and certainly would have felt it for life. What the word "he" means in that connection, is a puzzle for

logicians. I fell into the difficulty myself, the other day, when I had occasion to say that a man's character had been influenced, both by his inheritance of certain qualities and by the later circumstances of his education. Having said this, which, I think, aimed at a real meaning, it occurred to me that the phrase was grossly illogical, and I shall be still obliged if any one will put it straight for me. The difficulty was, that I had used the same form of words to indicate the influence of a separable accident, and to describe one aspect of the essential character. To say that a man is influenced by his education is to say that he would have been different had he gone, for example, to another school. That is intelligible. But to say that "he" would have been different if he had been born of other parents is absurd, for "he" would not have been "he". He would not have existed at all. "He" means the man who has grown out of the baby with all its innate qualities; and not some, but all those qualities, the very essence of the man himself, is, of course, the product of his progenitors. Such phrases, in short, suggest the fancy that a man had a pre-existence somewhere, and went about like Er the Pamphylian in Plato's myth, selecting the conditions of his next stay upon earth. In that case, no doubt, there might be some meaning in the doctrine. The

character of the future incarnation would depend upon the soul's choice of position. But as we know nothing about any pre-existent soul, we must agree that each of us starts as the little lump of humanity, every characteristic of which is determined by the characteristics of the parents, however much its later career may be affected by the independent powers of thought and volition which it develops. So much, it seems to me, must be granted on all hands, and is perhaps implicitly denied by no one.

But granting this very obvious remark, what harm does "heredity" do us? It is the most familiar of all remarks that you and I and all of us depend upon our brains in some sense. If they are pierced, we die; if they are inflamed, we go mad; and their constitution determines the whole of our career. A grain of sand in the wrong place, as the old epigrams have told us,—in Cæsar's eye, for example,—may change the course of history. That unlucky fly, which, as Fuller remarks, could find no other place to creep into in the whole patrimony of St. Peter except the Pope's throat, choked the unlucky man, and, for the time at least, altered the ecclesiastical order of Christendom. In other words, we are dependent at every instant upon elements in the outside world,—bacteria, for instance,—and the working of our own physical organism. But, that being so, what

conceivable difference does it make whether the brain, which we certainly did not ourselves make, has a fixed resemblance to that of our parents, or be, if it be possible, the product of some other series of processes? It is important, no doubt, to recognise the fact; it would be of the highest importance if we could define the exact nature of the fact; but the influence upon any general ethical doctrine of the recognition of the bare fact itself seems to be precisely nothing at all. It is part of the necessary data of all psychological speculation, and has been recognised with more or less precision from the very first attempts to speculate.

Trying, once more, to discover what it is that alarms, or is said to alarm, some people, we are reminded of certain facts, which again are of profound interest in some respects. I take a special instance,—not, unfortunately, a rare or at all a strange instance,—to illustrate the point. Many years ago I knew a clergyman, a man of most amiable character and refined tastes. One morning he shocked his friends by performing the Church service in a state of intoxication, and within a few months had drunk himself to death. The case was explained,—that is, a proper name for it was found,—when we learnt that more than one of his nearest relations had developed similar propensities, and died in much the same way.

Then we called it an instance of "hereditary dipsomania," and were more or less consoled by the classification. We were not, I think, unreasonable. The discovery proved apparently that the man whom we had respected and admired was not a vulgar debauchee, who had been hypocritically concealing his vices; but that he had really possessed the excellent qualities attributed to him, only combined with an unfortunate constitutional tendency, which was as much a part of his original nature as a tendency to gout or consumption. Now this, as I think, suggests the problem which puzzles us at times. A man develops some vicious propensity, for which we were quite unprepared. In some cases, perhaps, he may show homicidal mania or kleptomania, or some of the other manias which physicians have discovered in late years. They say, though the lawyers are rather recalcitrant, that a man suffering from such a mania is not "responsible"; and if asked, why not? they reply, because he was the victim of a disease which made him unable to resist the morbid impulse. But then, we say, are not all our actions dependent upon our physical constitution? If a man develops homicidal mania, may not a murderer of the average type excuse himself upon the same ground? You have committed an action, we say, which shows you to be a man of abnormal wickedness. You are a blood-

thirsty, ferocious, inhuman villain. Certainly, he may reply; but if you could examine my brain you would see that I could not be anything else. There is something wrong about its molecular construction, or about the shape of the skull into which it was fitted, which makes bloodthirstiness quite as inevitable in me as a tendency to drink is in others, or perhaps as the most ardent philanthropy may be in some. In short, I am a murderer; but wickedness is so natural to me that you must in all fairness excuse me.

This is, of course, a kind of excuse which would not free a man from the gallows. It would simply suggest that punishment should not be considered from the moral, but, if I may say so, from the sanitary point of view. We should hang the murderer—not to satisfy our sense of justice, but to get rid of a nuisance. I will not now inquire what may be said upon that undoubtedly difficult problem; but I must touch upon the previous question which is raised by the argument. Would our supposed murderer make out a good case for himself? Is there no difference between him and the maniac; or, rather, what is the nature of the difference which we clearly recognise in practice? In the extreme case which our ancestors took as the typical case, the madman kills because he is under some complete illusion: he

supposes that he is only breaking a glass when he is really taking a life, and so forth. He is therefore not wicked, but accidentally mischievous. We have now come to recognise the existence of many states of mind intervening between this and complete sanity. Among them, for example, is the state of mind of the homicidal monomaniac, whose propensity is considered to be the cause of his actions, and which may be consistent with his being in many other respects capable of acting upon the ordinary motives and judging reasonably in most of the affairs of life. What, then, is the meaning of the statement that he is a madman, and therefore excusable? The contention must, of course, be, in the first place, that his character is in some way abnormal. He is not governable by the ordinary motives which determine human action. But, beyond this, it is evident that the abnormality is taken to mean something more than the mere deviation from the average. A man may be abominably wicked, and yet not in the least abnormal in the sense here required. He may be deficient in the higher motives, and the more brutal passions may be unusually developed; and yet we do not hold that he therefore deviates from the type. So, in a different sphere, we may have one man possessing enormous strength and another exceedingly feeble, one very active and another very clumsy; and

yet they may all be perfectly normal, they are free from physical disease, and all their physical functions may be performed according to the normal system. Entire freedom from disease, in short, is perfectly compatible with exceedingly wide deviations from the average, with capacity for walking a thousand miles in a thousand hours, or with inability to walk a single mile; and yet such deviations do not imply a departure from a certain common type. To say precisely what symptoms indicate mere differences within the normal type, and what imply an actual deviation from the type, is exceedingly difficult, if not impossible; and yet that such a distinction exists has to be constantly recognised. "So-and-so is delicate, but not diseased; feeble, but not deformed," has a definite meaning, though we may be unable to define the precise meaning of our words, or to decide which statement is true in particular cases.

The great difficulty in the case of insanity corresponds to this. The physician tells us that the madman's mind works abnormally, but not abnormally in the sense merely of having some faculties weaker and others stronger than is common; but in such a way as to indicate disease, and, moreover, a particular kind of diseases, or one, perhaps, of several particular kinds of diseases. The vagueness of this statement provokes lawyers, who have a natural love

of definite external tests to govern their decisions; and it has led to a number of delicate discussions, upon which I need not enter. The legal problem seems essentially to be, what tests should guide us in determining whether a man should be regarded as a normal human being, or as a being so far differing from the normal type that he should be treated exceptionally, and especially put under the guidance of other persons, and excused from legal responsibility, that is, liability to punishment.

I have to do with the moral problem alone. It is a still more difficult problem; but it has this advantage, that we do not require so definite an answer. We have not, happily, to decide whether our fellows shall go to heaven or to hell, though we have to decide whether they shall be hanged or locked up; and we must be content as a rule with very vague estimates as to their moral character. What we practically have to take, more or less roughly, into account is simply this: that our inference from conduct to character has often to be modified by the existence of these abnormal cases. A man is drunk on an important occasion; I infer, as a rule, that he has all the qualities which go with low sensuality; but in some cases the inference is wrong; the man may be really a person of most admirable feelings; but one of his instincts has suddenly taken an

abnormal development, owing to a set of causes entirely different from the usual causes. Another man suddenly and causelessly kills a friend. The natural inference that he must be a bloodthirsty brute is erroneous, if it turns out that he has acted from impulses not generated by any habitual want of benevolence, but from some special defect in the constitution of his brain. In other words, our moral judgment must vary in the two cases, and may vary so much that the same action may rightly suggest only pity in one case and abhorrence in the other; although, in many cases, where it may be very difficult to say what is the precise implication as to character, the judgment must, if we are properly diffident, remain obscure. The moral problem always depends ultimately upon this: What is the character implied by this conduct? If the moral conduct shows malignity within the normal type, it justifies condemnation; if it shows only a blind instinctive impulse, due to a deflection from the type, it may justify no other feelings than those which we have for the poor maniac who fancies himself a king, and takes his limbs to be made of glass.

If we hold that such responsibility implies free will we shall argue that the madman is deprived of free will, or that his freedom of will is more or less restricted, and that he is therefore irresponsible. In

my own opinion, that proposition would be by no means an easy one to establish. I fancy that a man may be insane and yet capable, within very wide limits, of being good or bad, and that therefore we must at any rate hold that he has still some power of free will. The bearing of this upon the question of moral responsibility brings us within sight of some delicate problems. But, however this may be, the criterion by which we shall have to judge whether we are believers in free will or determinists will be the same. The problem is essentially, is this man accessible to the motives by which normal men regulate their conduct? or does he so far deflect from the typical constitution, however that constitution may be precisely defined, that his conscience or his affections or his intellectual powers are unable to act according to the general laws of human nature?

Having said so much, I think that I may proceed to this conclusion, that the theory of heredity can make no real difference whatever to our problem. There is a difficulty for the metaphysician—the difficulty which is involved in discussions between materialists and idealists, determinists and believers in free will. I do not deny the existence of that difficulty. I only say that the question of heredity is altogether irrelevant to the difficulty. The desire to treat ethical problems by the methods of science may

predispose a thinker to materialism, and may at the same time lead him to attach particular importance to the doctrine of heredity. But that doctrine only takes note of facts which every theory has to state in its own phraseology, and do not alter the ultimate problem.

Let us, in fact, go back to our murderer. I am not responsible, he says, because I am determined by the processes in my brain. I am a mere machine, grinding out one set of actions or another as external accidents set my wheels and pulleys in motion. If that argument be fatal to moral responsibility, or to the belief that any truly moral action exists (a point which I do not argue), it will no doubt remove the moral element from the treatment both of murderers and madmen. They might still require different measures, just as we treat a machine differently when we consider that it is not of the normal construction, or that its various parts have somehow got out of gear, so that we can no longer, for example, expect that the mainspring will transmit its motion to the wheels. But, in any case, if the dependence upon the body be a fatal objection to morality in the highest sense, the circumstance that the body is made upon the plan of previously existing bodies makes no additional difficulty. If we could suppose every brain to be started afresh by a fortuitous con-

course of atoms, the difficulty would be neither increased nor diminished. The problem, are we automatic? and the validity of the inference, is morality meaningless? are questions altogether independent of the question, what particular kind of automata are we? and do we or do we not resemble a previous generation of automata?

If, however, we reply to the criminal that he is not a machine or an automaton, but a responsible, reasoning, and thinking being, we do not get away from the facts. We then assert that he is responsible because he possesses a certain moral constitution. But whatever words we may use to express the facts correctly, we must still allow that there is such a correlation between soul and body (if those old-fashioned words be admissible) that the health of his moral constitution depends at every instant upon the health of his nervous system and his brain. It may be shattered or destroyed by an injury; and, if this be so, what does it matter whether the injury—say the defective shape of the skull, which causes pressure on the brain—is due to some accident or to a connate malformation due to his parents? The difficulty, if it be difficulty, is that the want of responsibility is due to some cause, accidental relatively to him; and it matters not whether that cause be in his parents' constitution or in some other com-

bination of circumstances. In any case, we have to suppose, whatever the relation of mind and body, we must at least assume that a man is born with some character. Like everything that exists, he has certain definite qualities which he did not make for himself, and upon which his subsequent development depends. And, if that be once admitted, the whole difficulty still occurs, and the question as to whether the origin of these innate qualities be derived from his parents or from a something else is a mere matter of detail.

In fact, the confusion seems to me to arise from the vague phraseology which induces us to accept, virtually at least, the mental attitude of Dean Swift in *Er the Pamphylian*. We speak as if the man were an independent entity, lying somehow outside the chain of cause and effect, and arbitrarily plunged into it; nay, as if even his inner constitution were something superinduced upon his nature. It is really an absurd abstraction to distinguish between the man and his character, as though he meant a something existing without a character, and afterwards run into a mould by fate. The character is the man in certain relations, and he can never exist without it, any more than a piece of matter can be outside of all particular times and places. If the doctrine of free will and moral responsibility be so

interpreted as to imply our acceptance of such fallacies, I can only say that it appears to me to be irreconcilable with the most undeniable facts. But I am very far from supposing that any intelligent supporter of the doctrine would state it in such a form. He would admit as fully as I do the facts, and, if they can be admitted and reconciled to the doctrine of moral responsibility, certainly the doctrine of heredity can be so reconciled. The only peculiarity of the doctrine is, that it has called attention to an order of facts which must in any case be recognised by every philosopher; and that it helps, therefore, to disperse a fallacy which only requires articulate statement to show its radical want of logic or even conceivability. We are, beyond all doubt, affected somehow, and affected profoundly, by our environment; and this particular form of relation to other beings has no more bearing upon the problem than the other forces which have been recognised ever since speculation began.

There is, however, another side from which I must briefly consider the question of heredity; and it is a side which, I think, is really more important, because it involves issues of facts, and has suggested some more reasonable prejudices. It is, undoubtedly, very common that when a theory has obtained a certain currency it should be applied rashly beyond its

proper limits. When the speculations of Darwin encouraged us to believe that the natural selection might be analogous to artificial selection, that different species of animals have been produced as varieties of dogs and pigeons have been produced by breeders, it was, at least, tempting to apply the same formula directly to other cases. Some men of science have endeavoured to show that genius or criminality is hereditary; and that, if one man writes a great poem and another picks a pocket, it is always in virtue of their hereditary endowment. Within certain limits, this statement is not surprising, and I shall be very glad when men of science can tell us what those limits may be. Without being a man of science, I fully believe that our congenital characteristics form, as I have said, certain impassable limits to our development. One baby is a potential Shakespeare, and, probably, only one in a million. The qualities with which he starts, again, are, no doubt, derived from his parents, though we do not, as yet, understand in what way; whether, for example, we should infer that Shakespeare's parents had more than usual capacity, or were especially healthy, or had some peculiar form of one-sided development which generated the disease called poetical genius; or whether he may have inherited qualities from a remote ancestor, which had remained latent for several

generations. In any case, he was at birth only a potential Shakespeare. He might have died of the measles, or been made stupid by a sunstroke, or have taken to drink in bad company, or have run away to sea, or been sent to the University and become a mere bishop or professor of casuistry; in short, though he could not easily have done very much better work than he did, he might have done inconceivably less. That is to say, his congenital qualities implied certain powers; but what he would do with them remained to be partly determined by an indefinite variety of external circumstances acting upon him in various ways. Hence, we have always the complex problem, what, given certain raw material in the shape of new-born babies, will be the characteristics of the finished product in the shape of a grown-up population? If the social state is determined from the inherited qualities directly, we should be able, for example, to infer from a given proportion of criminals, that a certain number of children were born with a corresponding physical constitution, with "foreheads villainous low," and prognathous jaws, and with the other peculiar signs which mark the felon from his birth. In that case, again, we should infer, I suppose, that the only possible means of improving the social state would be by somehow improving the breed; perhaps, by appointing some

of the inspectors who play so great a part in modern society, to examine infants, and get rid of those who were thus distinguished, by the means now adopted in the case of superfluous puppies. One objection to this system is, of course, that men of science have not yet shown that they are qualified for exercising such a supervision; and there are other difficulties upon which I need not dwell. This much, indeed, we may grant without any scientific prepossessions whatever. It is clearly very desirable that every generation should raise up for its successors as many children with sturdy bodies and vigorous brains as possible; and it is to be hoped that the objection to transmitting disease and imbecility may be more generally recognised, and, in some shape or other, have an influence even upon the strongest passions. But I am only concerned with the general theory, which, if I understand it rightly, would appear to imply that the characteristics of a society are irrevocably fixed by the characteristics of the children born into it; and, whether this theory be true or false, we must admit that it has a considerable bearing upon morality. If, in fact, we hold it to be rigidly true, we should have to suppose that no serious improvement can be produced in society at large, except by breeding a superior race of men. This, again, is a discouraging prospect. Let me

quote what has been said by an authority who expresses, I believe, the accepted scientific view. "There can be no doubt," says Professor Huxley, "that vast changes have taken place in English civilisation since the days of the Tudors. But I am not aware that there is a single particle of evidence in favour of the conclusion that this evolutionary process has been accompanied by any modification of the physical or the mental characters of the men who have been the subjects of it. I have not met with any grounds for suspecting that the average Englishmen of to-day are sensibly different from those that Shakespeare knew and drew." The statement, I imagine, might be very much extended. I do not suppose that the average cockney of to-day is a superior animal, physically or morally, to the average Athenian of the days of Pericles, or even, it may be, to the pre-historic savages who made flint implements for the amusement of our antiquaries. Briefly, whatever change has taken place, within historical period, has been a social change, not a change in the structure of the individual. This is surely conceivable. We need only consider, for example, how vast a change has been made in all the conditions of life by the modern applications of practical science. Whether, in other respects, we are better or worse than our forefathers, we have an enormously greater

aggregate of wealth now than we had, say, two centuries ago; we can support four times the population, though the condition of the lowest stratum may not be better. And this amazing advance of wealth is not due to the fact that Englishmen of to-day have better brains for mathematics than the Englishmen of Newton's time; but to the accumulation of capital, the improvement of the natural conditions of the soil, the turning to account of vast masses of material, previously neglected; to the invention of machinery, and so forth; all of which imply, not necessarily the very slightest improvement of natural capacity, but simply the growth of knowledge, and the fact that each generation has preserved more than it has consumed. What we call progress or civilisation, which means, whatever else it may or may not mean, a gigantic increase in the power of man over nature, is due, therefore, to the one fact that man can accumulate. He can modify the earth in such a way as to facilitate the labours of the coming generations; he can make tools which last beyond his own time, and which themselves become, as it were, the ancestors of incomparably superior tools; he can, moreover, accumulate and transmit knowledge, not merely the knowledge of facts, but the knowledge of scientific laws and of useful inventions, and of the right methods of investigating facts. When Newton made

a discovery, he made it for all the following generations; and, though it may well be that no superior or even equal intellect has since arisen to carry on his work, the dwarf now stands on the shoulders of the giant. It is not simply that we know more facts. The modes of mathematical inquiry differ as much from those which Newton could employ, as the latest steam engine from the crude fire machine before the time of Watt; and an average undergraduate can solve with ease problems which once puzzled the greatest intellects that ever appeared among men. Man, then, can accumulate; and that simple fact enables every generation enormously to surpass its predecessors. Accumulation, again, is, of course, a form of inheritance. We are born heirs to the intellectual as well as to the material fortunes of our ancestors. But, it is obvious, this is something very different from heredity. It supposes an alteration, not in the man, but in his surroundings or his education in the widest sense; not in his intellectual capacity, but in the knowledge which it can attain and the rules which it has worked out. In order that a man may be capable either of bequeathing or inheriting, he must have certain faculties; he must be an observing, remembering, reasoning animal; but he may become indefinitely richer, not from any improvement in his powers of observing and remember-

ing and using, but simply from the change in his position. People's memories, it is sometimes suggested, have been weakened by the invention of printing. But, weakened or not, we have an incomparably greater knowledge of the past than was formerly possible, because we can now keep our memories upon our bookshelves, in the form of histories and encyclopædias, and know every fact that we want to know when we want it, without troubling ourselves to fill our minds with all the knowledge that may ever be possibly useful. A library is an external and materialised memory. But without illustrating so plain a point any further, I simply take note of what it implies: that is, that, as Professor Huxley has pointed out, all that distinguishes the present state of things from the state of things in the time of Elizabeth, or, perhaps, at the time of remote Egyptian dynasties, may be due, not to any change in the individual, but to what is called the social factor. The inference from the individual to the society, or from the society to the individual, is, therefore, rigidly impossible, because, given the man, the position in which he is placed and the stage of development of the society to which he belongs, are relevant facts which exercise an incalculably great influence.

If this be true, what follows? We remark, in the

first place, that the evolution of which we speak in regard to natural history, the process by which the present population of the globe has gradually grown out of the population of remote geological epochs, is slow. The changes which it may produce are not sensible within a generation—for, indeed, the very nature of the case implies that they must take many generations—not perhaps even within such a period as is covered by all authentic history. It is not, of course, on that account to be overlooked for scientific purposes. Monkeys must have grown into men before they could begin to accumulate capital, either material or spiritual. The faculty of accumulating must itself have been developed. Only when once it was developed, another process would begin, the process of social evolution, which, however it may resemble the other, or possibly be in some sense its continuation, proceeds, at least, at a totally different rate. The difference is comparable, one may say roughly, to the difference between the speed of an express train and the speed of a four-wheeled waggon. Beneath the surface, it may be, the slower process is still continuing; men, for anything I can say to the contrary, may be acquiring larger brains and more sensitive bodies; and it is further possible, or rather obvious, that if we can do anything to facilitate this proceeding, to behave so as to give nature a better chance of

turning out better work, we ought to do so. Only nature is pretty sure to take her time about it. How far, again, one process is to be considered as a continuation of the other, or as a modification, or even as in opposition to it, is a point which I cannot now touch. What I have to say is simply this: that if we take any two periods of society, the present, for example, and that of a thousand or five thousand years ago, we shall find enormous or incalculably great differences in the social structure, in the amount of knowledge, in the character of the ethical, religious, and philosophical beliefs, and in the relations between the individuals of which the society is constructed; but between the individuals at the two periods we may find hardly any definable difference whatever. For anything we can say, we should be able, if we could move people about in time as well as in space, to exchange a thousand infants of the nineteenth century A.D., for a thousand of the nineteenth century B.C., and nobody would be able to detect the difference which would result.

Hence it follows, in my opinion, that the evolutionary process with which moralists and political philosophers have practically to deal, is what I have called the social, and not the individual process. We inherit thoughts as we inherit wealth; we inherit customs and laws and forms of worship, and indeed

our whole mental furniture; we can add enormously to our inheritance, and can transmit the augmented fund to our descendants. But the other process of inheritance, to which the word "heredity" is taken to apply, is not, immediately at least, cumulative. We inherit the old faculties, bodily and mental, unaltered, or with infinitesimal alterations, though we live in a different environment, and are ourselves as much altered as our environment. The modern social organism is built up, if I may say so, of cells almost identical in their properties with those of the old organism, although the mode of combination gives entirely new properties to the whole, and brings out new actions and reactions among the constituent cells themselves.

I have been touching the edge of certain problems of great interest but enormous complexity, and I shall venture to indicate the difference between these views and some which have recently attracted much attention. Mr. Kidd's work upon "Social Evolution" has made the phrase popular; but, instead of using it in my sense, he speaks as though "social evolution" involved what I have called individual evolution. In order to keep within limits, I will confine myself to one case upon which he lays great stress. It will show sufficiently why I hold his mode of reasoning to be inconclusive. Mr. Kidd has

achieved success by very excellent qualities, by remarkable literary ability, and by his uniformly high tone of moral feeling. I should, therefore, be very sorry to speak of him otherwise than respectfully. Mr. Kidd, however, chooses to maintain a thesis in which he has certainly no personal interest,—the thesis, namely, that a little stupidity may be a very good thing. This view is, perhaps, intelligible when we observe that he also maintains that the progress of the race depends upon its holding "ultra-rational," which I think he would find it hard to distinguish from "irrational," beliefs. In support of this view he writes a chapter to prove that "progress is not primarily intellectual". The argument of which I have spoken is part of this proof. The Greeks, he tells us, were a race intellectually superior to ourselves. They were, so Mr. Galton informs him, two degrees above modern Englishmen in the scale of intelligence, and as superior to us as we are to the negro. And yet, says Mr. Kidd, this marvellous race died out, and no trace of its blood is now to be found in the present population of the world. Let us look shortly into the logic of this argument, and consider how far it is entitled to be regarded as scientific reasoning.

First of all, I should ask, what precisely is meant by "the Greeks"? The argument is founded partly

on the number of great thinkers, poets, and artists, in proportion to the population. Now, it is obviously essential to a scientific statement that we should know what is the population indicated. If we compare the number of great men at Athens in its best period with the number of free Athenians, we shall get one ratio; if we admit the Athenian slaves, or add Bœotia and other Greek States to our population, we get quite a different ratio. And the difference is of immense importance. The smaller the population, the higher the excellence indicated by a given number of great men; but, also, the smaller the population, the less is the wonder that it should have died out or been swallowed up in the whirlpools of political, religious, and social convulsions. A similar remark applies in regard to the period during which this race flourished. When did they begin and when did they cease to be superior to other people? Till the statement is more precise we do not even know what are the phenomena to be explained; and the case is susceptible of any number of explanations. Did the superior race cease to be prolific; or was it prolific, but of inferior descendants; and, if so, was it because it was mixed with races of an inferior stamp; or was it because its position exposed it to the attacks of more numerous enemies; or because its energy led it to attempt

impossible feats? Has it died out, or has it been swamped by other races? To answer such questions is absolutely necessary before we can say positively that the higher organisation was the cause of the decay, or that it did not cause the decay by some indirect process due to the special combination of circumstances. But to answer such questions, if they be answerable at all, would require the investigations of a lifetime, and a mastery of a whole series of studies, historical, statistical, ethnological, and so forth, in which I am an absolute ignoramus. But I cannot perceive that Mr. Kidd claims more than second-hand information.

But, secondly, there is another obvious question to which an answer is necessary. Mr. Kidd and Mr. Galton deduce their view about Greek intellect, first, from the proportion of great men. Does, then, the occurrence of a group of great men at a certain period prove a superior organisation in the race? That leads to a very familiar problem: What were the causes of what we may call the flowering times of arts and sciences? We are all familiar with the phenomenon; with the sudden display of astonishing excellence at Athens, at Florence, or in the England of Elizabeth. It seems to be the rule that processes which may have been going on quietly for centuries suddenly culminate; that artistic, poetic, or philosophic excellence becomes unprecedentedly common

for a generation or two, and that the impulse then dies away as rapidly. It is the kind of problem which is satisfactorily solved by the authors of university prize essays, which somehow fail to convince the world or to be republished by their writers. Are we, then, entitled to argue from the great works an organic superiority in the race? Must we suppose, for example, that Englishmen at the time of Shakespeare and Bacon and Spenser and Raleigh were an abler race than their descendants, because, when there was a very much smaller number of educated men, they produced more first-rate authors than have been produced by generations much more numerous and more generally cultivated? This seems to me at least to be a very rash hypothesis; and some of the obvious remarks made in our university essays seem to me to indicate considerations which, though not conclusive, cannot be neglected. It is clear, for example, that particular stages of intellectual progress are abnormally stimulating; that, as the last step to a pass in the mountains suddenly reveals vast prospects, while a hundred equally difficult steps before made no appreciable change, so there are mental advances which, as at the time of Bacon, seemed suddenly to disclose boundless prospects of knowledge. It is the Pisgah sight of the promised land which causes a burst of energy. Or, again, a

certain social condition is obviously required; philosophers and poets may exist potentially among barbarous tribes, but they cannot get a chance to speak, and they have no opportunity of communication with other thinkers. The intellect may be impelled in various directions, some of which leave no trace of a tangible kind. The amount of intellectual power implied in building up the Roman Empire may have been as great as that implied in developing Greek art; and in America, as we are often told, intellect turns to dollar-making, instead of book-writing. So, conversely, the outburst of power may indicate, not greater faculties, but special opportunities, or special stimulus, applied to already existing faculties. Everybody who has written an æsthetic treatise has pointed to all manner of conditions which were in this sense favourable to the Greeks. How far such conditions were sufficient I cannot even guess; but at least an allowance must be made for them before we can argue from the achievements to the intrinsic power of the race which achieved. I do not see that it is even "proved" that the average Athenian was in the least superior in this sense to the average Englishman. It would require a lifetime of study to pronounce any opinion worth having. I fully confess that, so far as a vague impression is worth anything, it is the most obvious

impression, after looking at the Elgin marbles, that the Greeks were possessed of a finer organisation than ourselves. Still, I cannot accept as certain the quasi-mathematical formula that the Greek is to the Englishman as the Englishman to the negro.

This, however, suggests another and very difficult series of problems. Mr. Kidd is arguing against intellectual superiority. He, of course, does not argue that the general superiority of a race leads to its disappearance; but that a one-sided superiority—an improvement of one set of faculties at the expense of others—may have that result. This at once suggests a whole series of psychological problems. The intellect and the emotional nature are not two separate organs, each capable of independent development. Every mental process involves both, and neither faculty can be developed without reference to the other. Mr. Kidd accepts the conclusion that certain primitive races were as clever as ourselves, because their brains were as large. If the argument be sound, it proves equally that their emotional nature was as well developed as ours; for no one can doubt that the brain is the physical condition of feeling as well as of thought. Even the most abstract thought, as he elsewhere notices, implies certain moral qualities. Newton remarked that he was superior to other men, not because his

intellect was clearer, but because he attended more persistently to his problems. The statement, I think, involves a fallacy. Newton himself, no doubt, did better the longer he kept a problem before him. He inferred, unjustifiably, that of two different men, the one who could keep up his attention longest would be the best. That does not follow. The difference may indeed be moral as well as intellectual; and it is quite true that a power of sustained attention is of the highest importance in mathematics, and that that power supposes a moral quality; but, conversely, the power of attention probably implies also the power of clear intellectual vision. A muddle-headed man would find attention useless. This is, of course, still clearer in the case where the mind is exercised upon questions of human interest. The statesman and the dramatist both depend upon their power of sympathy and the strength of their emotions, as much as upon their logical capacity. To feel for others I must imagine their position: if I imagine it, I can hardly avoid feeling for them. "Altruism" is the product, in other words, of a process both intellectual and moral.

Now, remembering this, we see the difficulty of pronouncing upon the nature of the Greek organisation. Perhaps the commonest of all remarks

upon Greek work is the symmetry and harmony, the "all-roundness," if I may say so, of the development implied. Poetry and philosophy, art and science seem to be so blended in their work that we cannot tell which faculty is predominant. What, then, is the inequality of development which is essential to Mr. Kidd's argument? They were wanting, he seems to answer, in "altruism". What does this mean? The astonishing power of the Greeks was certainly as conspicuous in poetry and art as in anything else; and that power surely implies development of the emotional as well as of the intellectual nature. By a defect of "altruism," I take him to mean that these emotions did not flow along the channel of general philanthropy. They were wanting then, as I should put it, rather in cosmopolitanism than in altruism. If altruism means care for something outside yourself, where could we find better examples of altruism than at Thermopylæ or Marathon? Was it not due to Greek altruism in this form (some historians would say) that Mr. Kidd is not now living under the rule of a Persian Satrap? The altruism, no doubt, meant an intense and patriotic devotion to a small State, or an interest in Greek as against barbarian, and was compatible with much brutality to individuals and acquiescence in slavery. But this does

not indicate an absence of the emotions themselves, but simply their confinement within narrow limits, by the conditions under which they were placed. Slavery, for example, is abominable; but I see no reason for supposing that the slave-holders in America were worse men by innate constitution than their opponents. They were corrupted by their position.

This, in any case, leads to another problem. Were the Greeks more or less altruistic than other races? If you could show that altruistic races had survived while the Greeks perished, there might be a presumption that the want of altruism was the cause of their decay. But this again does not seem to be the case. Hardly one of the ancient races, indeed, has survived unvaried. The Romans were at least as brutal as the Greeks, and, one would say, as far from "altruistic". Yet they overpowered the Greeks. How, then, can it be inferred that the Greeks perished because of defective altruism? The struggle for existence was between races equally defective to all appearance in that quality; and it must be a sophistry to signalise its absence in one as the cause of its disappearance. There is, indeed, one race to which every one would turn as the most prominent example of survival, namely, the Jews. The Jews

have enormous merits and great intellectual endowments; but can anybody say that they were altruistic in the sense of being cosmopolitan? Are they not conspicuous, beyond any race, for the narrower forms of altruism, rejection of a cosmopolitan creed, even when it arose among them, and exclusive devotion to the welfare of their own people? I think that it would be perfectly easy to argue that the Greeks died out just because of their cosmopolitan and therefore dispersive tendencies, and that the Jews have held out from a judicious adherence to narrower views of self-preservation. But personally I regard all such "arguments" as really belonging to the extra-scientific regions of rhetorical illustration.

This suggests one other point which requires consideration. Mr. Kidd regards it as proved that progress has been due to the Christian religion, which revealed the new moral doctrine. The Christian religion introduced, it seems, that belief in the supernatural which is essential to altruism. It seems to me to be inconsistent with his own principles, that he should attribute progress to what is essentially, on his own showing, an intellectual change: that is, to a change in belief and even to a change which, in comparison with the old polytheism, was distinctly sceptical and rationalistic. But one point

is clear. The introduction of Christianity may be interpreted more consistently in a totally different way. The Greek who became a Christian was not provided with a new set of emotions, but his emotions were directed into new channels. He ceased to care for Athens, because Athens had ceased to be an independent State; he began to be cosmopolitan when he was forced to be part of a cosmopolitan empire. The important distinction was no longer the distinction between Athenian and Spartan, but between the different classes in the world-wide system. That is to say, the "altruism" which came in with Christianity was not the product of a new dogma suddenly dropped from heaven; but of the new social condition, which made it inevitable that the forces which previously stimulated a local patriotism should now exert themselves nearer a cosmopolitan organisation. This is, of course, a commonplace; but, for that reason, it should not be simply ignored. It suggests one other consequence of Mr. Kidd's theory. It is proved, he says, that the progress of the Western world is due to Christianity. His "proof," as I suppose, is that the States which have sprung out of the old Empire of the West have been Christian and have progressed. How, then, about the Empire of the East? If the great Kingdoms of the West are the unique example of progress, what is the unique

example of decay? Surely, the regions where Christian dogmatic theology was defended by Athanasius and Chrysostom. If you wish to point out a region where the race has actually gone backwards, you would refer to the Turkish Empire. Why, if Christianity was the sole cause of progress in one quarter, was it comparable with complete decay in the other? Does the Eastern theory about the *filiogue* explain it? Or were the Mohammedans more "altruistic" than the Christians? Or is it that it is absurd, especially upon Mr. Kidd's own doctrine, to assign the dogmatic creed of a race as the sole cause of its character and its success in the struggle for existence?

I do not lay any stress upon the argument, except in a negative sense. I do not see, that is, how Mr. Kidd can make his theory fit the facts. But I infer one other remark. It is impossible to divine the causes of the rise and fall of empires, the success or decay of a race, from any of these sweeping generalisations about ill-defined qualities. If we ask why the Greeks died out, we should have to take into account another and a totally different set of considerations: what I may call the accidents of their position. We should have to consider all the arguments by which historians have tried to explain the events; the facts of physical geography, for

example, which account for the division into small separate States; the relations of the Greeks to the Eastern races on the one side, and to the Romans on the other; and, briefly, to all the material conditions, those different from the intrinsic character of the race, by which the whole course of political development and of the conflict between different peoples, is moulded and directed into particular courses. I do not say, for I cannot guess, what would be the result of such an inquiry; but I think it just as possible that it would lead us to wonder at the persistence of the Greek States for so long a period, as that it would lead us to wonder at their disappearance. Our conclusion might be, that nothing but the astonishing intellectual powers of the Greeks enabled them to play so great a part in the world's history, not that their intellectual superiority was the cause of their decay.

I consider, therefore, that the alleged fact is stated so vaguely that we have no distinct problem set before us; that we don't know what is the process to be explained; that the suggested intellectual superiority is doubtful, at least in degree: that the excess of intellectual above other development, which the superiority is supposed to have created, is not proved, and, still less, that such excess was more conspicuous among the Greeks than among their

rivals; that, even if it existed, it is not proved that it would have produced the effect ascribed to it; and, finally, that the other causes which undoubtedly operated, are simply overlooked. I confess, therefore, that the whole argument seems to me to illustrate the danger of rashly applying certain scientific formulæ,—themselves, perhaps, still doubtful,—to new and exceedingly complex questions. If Darwin had reasoned in this light-hearted way, no one would have been moved by his conclusions.

But I must still add, what brings me back to my point, that even if the proposition were proved, it would not establish the conclusion. It may be, that races of abnormal intellectual development are at a disadvantage in the struggle for existence. That does not prove that "progress is not primarily intellectual". Buckle, who argued that progress was due to intellectual causes exclusively, always assumed that human nature was constant, or that the faculties did not change. Though I do not accept his view, any more than Mr. Kidd's, I do not see that he was inconsistent. I take the most obvious case to illustrate the point. No one can doubt that one of the most important influences in modern social evolution was the set of mechanical contrivances devised by Arkwright and Watt and their contemporaries. Without them, the enormous

development of great cities, of a population of artisans, and of the bringing together of all quarters of the globe, would have been impossible. The inventions, again, were due to no moral purpose in the inventors. They wanted to make money, and represented what is called (I do not say justly) the most egoistic impulse of modern times. One condition, then, of the great social change was essentially intellectual. This does not mean that Watt was a cleverer man than Archimedes. I don't know whether he was or not; but it does mean that the mechanical sciences had improved; and, consequently, that Watt, though not possessed of intrinsically greater powers, was, in this direction, a more intellectual person. He had inherited the truths discovered by Archimedes and many generations of successors. That science should be efficient, it is not required that men should be greater geniuses than their predecessors; but simply that they should know more of the facts and laws of nature, and have, so to speak, better intellectual tools. Mr. Kidd thinks that the inability of a savage to count three does not prove him to be stupid, only to be without certain rules discovered by the higher races. Yet, he will not deny that by the help of arithmetic we can work out sums inconceivable to the savage; and that our power affects our whole social position. Does not the existence of a currency

affect mankind; and if we could not count, could we make use of it?

I therefore hold that in many cases the causes of progress are "primarily intellectual". The mechanical discoveries of which I have spoken have revolutionised the whole world. I agree, indeed, fully, that the causes are not exclusively intellectual. A certain social condition—the existence, to say nothing more, of peace and order over wide regions—was as necessary as the intellectual condition to the development of commerce and manufactures. This, of course, implies the growth of corresponding sentiments, including, no doubt, what Mr. Kidd means by altruism. But the change may, and, I fancy, generally does, originate in intellectual movements. The new ideas shake the world. Reason, says Mr. Kidd, is the great disintegrating and egoistic force. I should say that reasoning is essentially altruistic: my discoveries are mentally discoveries for you; I cannot keep a truth for my private consumption, as I can keep a material product. But it is true, to use eulogistic instead of dyslogistic language, that reason is the great force of movement, and breaks up the old social conditions, not only by getting rid of the ultra-rational, but by spreading the power of the rational; and therefore it inevitably brings about

a state of things in which the old moral impulses have to run in new channels; a narrow patriotism, to widen into a regard for the interests of other races; and the class distinctions which repose upon no reasonable ground, to disappear in favour of a wider humanity. When we are arguing about an organism, it is surely a mistake to fix our minds upon one aspect of the problem: to deny with Buckle the moral evolution, and with Mr. Kidd to disparage the intellectual evolution.

Mr. Kidd's doctrine appears to me, though, of course, not to him, to be eminently discouraging. If he worked it out logically, his argument, I think, would come to this: that the progress of mankind has resulted from the accidental, that is, inexplicable, appearance of a quality called altruism, which gave to those who possessed it an advantage in the struggle for existence. It would be far more consistent to say that the religious dogma was determined by this new element, than that it was the cause. Altruism, again, was only produced in effect on this hypothesis by the slow results of a process necessarily lasting through many generations; and our only hope must be in a slow organic change of the primary characteristics of mankind. Now, it is, of course, true that those characteristics, whatever they may be, impose

definite limits upon our progress. The raw material limits the product; and the new-born baby is the raw material of society, as wool is of cloth: you cannot convert it into tissue of gold. So much is undeniable. We, it is said, have been developed out of an arboreal animal, and I have sometimes regretted that we were not developed out of a flying animal. The course of civilisation would have been very different if we had not been forced to come into contact by crawling and swimming, instead of the much freer methods of aerial travelling. However, as things were, the choice was apparently between wings and hands; and if we could not have both, perhaps hands were preferable, and may in time lead to flying machines. The speculation, it may be, borders upon the fanciful. I mention it only by way of illustrating the inevitable conditions imposed upon us by "heredity". We have to be content with walking instead of flying; and similarly we have to be content with having only the five senses of our forefathers, and the various old-fashioned apparatuses for eating, drinking, digesting, and so forth, which they unconsciously elaborated. No material change can possibly be made in this system within any period to which we can look forward. To regret these limitations is just as

idle as to regret that we cannot fly, or that we cannot extend our voyages to the moon. They are part of the primary data of the problem with which we have to deal; and to regret that that problem was not differently contrived is to propose to set about reconstructing the universe. But when we go on to ask how far this limits any possibilities of achieving really desirable, because distinctly conceivable results, I say that we have ample room for hopes large enough to animate our loftiest desires. We inherit, it is true, certain faculties which scarcely alter, or do not perceptibly alter, for the better. We do not see or smell or hear better than the savage, and in some of these faculties we are surpassed by the dog. We inherit also certain intellectual powers, and, if they improve, the improvement is so slow as to be perceptible only after many generations. But then this intellect carries with it another power,—the power of inheriting thoughts, beliefs, methods of reasoning and rules of conduct. And, therefore, to the organic evolution is added the social evolution, which enables us to accumulate our vast spiritual inheritance. The inheritance is everything, or almost everything, that makes the distinctions between the civilised races of to-day and the wandering savages who roamed the fens and the

forests which were supplanted by fields and towns. And this, I think, makes room enough for all reasonable aspirations, though it certainly does not open any prospect that we shall ever become gods or angels.

Thus, for example, we look with sorrow, sometimes with something like despair, upon the masses of the criminal or degraded population which grovels at the base of modern society. If we were bound to say, the crime and the stupidity are the necessary expression of the shape of the skull and the organisation of the brain; if we had therefore to infer that the only possible remedy is by so modifying the struggle for existence that the inferior forms may be killed off and a better breed of humanity take the place of the present; we should certainly feel that we were confined within very narrow limits. I do not for a moment say, that such considerations may not point to important practical conclusions. I should be very glad to hear of any practical suggestions for so applying these doctrines as to increase the probability that the next generation may be stronger, healthier, and more intelligent than the present. But I also assert that the most obvious facts also show that there are enormous possibilities of progress without supposing any such organic transformation. If all that makes the

difference between the England of to-day and the England of two or three centuries back is the presence of the social factor, not of the organic change, it shows in the most striking way the vast educability of mankind, even without any ultimate change of human nature. We must all, I think, have been impressed lately by one of the most singular phenomena which have ever taken place in history. We have ourselves seen the transformation of the Japanese—whom we so recently regarded as semi-barbarians—acquire almost at a bound all the arts of Western civilisation, and able not only to use with singular effect that most complex and delicate piece of machinery which forms a modern warship, but to adopt systems of military organisation and the strategy of a Moltke. That is not because the Japanese have changed any one of their physical characteristics, for they are the very same men who the other day were chiefly known to us as performing the "happy despatch". They have changed simply because they were able to assimilate European results. Now, if that be a perfectly possible result, consistently with all the so-called laws of heredity, the same laws cannot be inconsistent with changes of a similar character within ourselves. You take a thorough ruffian,—a drinking, rowdy, fighting

brute, who has stamped his wife or his friend into a jelly. You say that he is an illustration of slavism, or the reproduction of an ancient type which once had its place among his ancestors. The fact may be quite true; that he is, for example, acting still in the spirit of those ancient Vikings who have been idealised by our romantic writers; but who, when they landed in an old British village, behaved pretty much as the modern roughs or some of those noble blackguards who are described in Mr. Rudyard Kipling's novels. But if you mean that he is divided from civilised beings by an impassable gulf, and is doomed to be a scoundrel by the shape of his skull, I venture to dispute the assumption. The Viking in a generation or two became the Norman knight, capable of the highest cultivation of his time; and even the rough, according to Mr. Rudyard Kipling, is capable, under judicious discipline, of developing some very fine qualities, chiefly, it is true, in the shape of devotion to his colours. To wean him from some of his weaknesses it is probably necessary to catch him rather younger. All, however, that I desire to say, for the present, is this—as it seems to me—very undeniable fact: that the difference between a civilised man and a barbarian, between the highest types of modern life and the

apparently irreclaimable brutes who are exhibited in our police-courts, is not dependent upon the mark of the beast irreclaimably fixed upon them at their birth; but to certain later influences, which may or may not be brought to bear upon them effectually. There is nothing, for example, in the doctrine of heredity inconsistent with the belief that if such influences could be properly directed, the standard, say, of sobriety and prudence among the lowest classes might be improved, as much as the standard of the same virtues has been improved in classes above them. The consequences of such a change would, I suspect, be incomparably greater than the consequences of whole systems of laws regulating the hours of labour and whole armies of official inspectors.

But into this I need not go; and I have only one thing to say in conclusion. I have spoken of the enormous results of what we call progress and civilisation. That they are in one sense enormous is, I suppose, undeniable. That the power which we generally describe as the command of man over nature has been immensely increased is too palpable a fact to be denied; that there has been a corresponding change in many political and social respects is a fact which I only mention without seeking to say how far it has been in all respects

a change for the better. Further, I urge that this change, whatever it is, has not been due to a change in the individual constitution, but to a change in the social factor. And, this being so, I simply suggest that, considering how vast is the total change thus effected, we may reasonably hope, or, at the very least, we may reasonably endeavour to justify the hope, that a change of great magnitude may be brought about in those directions where we all have to regret the survival or even the development of so much that is melancholy: of regeneration going on alongside of amelioration. I think that the doctrine of heredity is sometimes interpreted in such a way as to suggest the hopelessness or at least the extreme difficulty of introducing any sensible improvement within any limited time; and what I have tried to urge is that, if properly understood, it does not in the least degree tend to justify such forebodings, or to imply that we are to abandon ourselves to a demoralising fatalism.

PUNISHMENT.

I INVITE you to consider a rather dry problem. I ventured to select this topic because it has lately been my duty to occupy myself with certain legal writings, which, perhaps, took me a little beyond my depth. They touched, however, problems which are common to the lawyer and to the moralist. Although not a lawyer, I am interested in some moral problems which have also a legal aspect. What I propose to do this evening is, to consider certain questions which lie in the region common to both provinces of inquiry, and especially this question: What is the true ethical theory of punishments inflicted by the criminal law? How, and in what sense, are they to be regarded as just? There is, obviously, a relation between the two codes—moral and legal. Murder is both a sin and a crime: a breach of the moral law, and of the laws of every civilised country. Yet, there is one broad and deep distinction between the two systems of law. The moral law is essentially concerned with a man's motives. To say that a man's conduct is

wicked, is necessarily also to say that it is the action of a bad man, or due to evil passions. Murder is wicked, as it is the manifestation of the murderer's hatred of his neighbour. The criminal law, on the other hand, has to deal, in the first instance, with the external facts. It contemplates, primarily, what a man does, not what he is. It does not attempt to punish every man who hates his neighbour, but every man who has, in fact, killed, whether the action springs from hatred or some other motive. Every one who deliberately kills, unless the act falls under certain definite exceptions, is guilty of murder. This, of course, does not imply that the moral aspect is of no account. The exceptions are so arranged that the legal classification corresponds roughly to the moral classification. Under certain exceptions, killing is regarded as justifiable homicide, and under others, it is only manslaughter, and, therefore, receives none, or a slighter penalty. The coincidence between the codes may thus be very close. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the action condemned by the criminal law will be condemned by the moralist. The man who is legally guilty of murder is also, almost invariably, guilty of a great moral offence. Although, again, the moral law applies to large classes of conduct, which are not within the cognisance of the criminal law, it is, at

least, plainly desirable that the criminal law should condemn nothing which is not also morally wrong. The sway of the moral law is universal; it applies to all conduct, and, of course, to the conduct of legislators and judges: they and the law which they define and apply should be consistent with the general law of right and wrong. They and all of us are bound not to make virtue more difficult nor vice easier.

But, further, the questions as to the relations between the two codes arise in various directions. It is obvious that the criminal law has to employ very rough and ready methods. It cannot estimate, with any accuracy, the degree of immorality implied by any given action. It cannot, and it does not attempt to, look closely into the secrets of a man's heart. It cannot inquire, as a rule, how far a man's crime is the result of bad education or bad surroundings; how far it implies thorough corruption or only superficial faults of temper, or a misunderstanding of some fact or doctrine. It cannot take into account a number of metaphysical or psychological considerations which are connected with the theory of moral responsibility. To settle such points you would have to empanel a jury of philosophers, and the only thing of which you could be certain would be, that such a jury would never agree upon a verdict,

Again, there are whole classes of virtues and vices with which the criminal law is not concerned. Ingratitude, to take the common example, is a grave vice, but one which it would be absurd to punish legally. Not only would such an attempt involve impossible inquiries, but the attempt would be self-defeating. If the duty of gratitude to a benefactor were turned into a legal obligation, gratitude proper would cease to exist. To confer a benefit would be the same thing as to acquire a right to repayment. A man who allows his best friend to starve, or to go to the workhouse, may be, morally, far worse than a thief; but you could not punish him legally, without adopting a principle which, even if practicable, would, so far as it operated, be destructive of all disinterested friendship. The law, again, can deal only with criminals who are found out. What proportion they may bear to the whole class of moral offenders is not discoverable; but it is, at least, safe to say that, for every man whom you convict of a crime, you must leave unpunished, because undetected, another sinner who is equally deserving of punishment. And, finally, it is apparently impossible to say, upon any intelligible grounds, what should be the proportion between crime and punishment. How many years' imprisonment does a man deserve for putting out his neighbour's eye? I do not

see how such a rule of three can be stated. The good old theory of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, seems to suggest a possible criterion. But it was difficult to carry out. Deloraine, in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, has, as he points out, killed Musgrove's brother; but, on the other hand, Musgrove has killed Deloraine's nephew, and, besides, got a thousand marks ransom out of Deloraine himself. Is the account to be regarded as accurately balanced? Is one brother just equal to a nephew plus a thousand marks? The theory, of course, is an application of an inappropriate analogy. If we regard crime simply as a case of private injury, we may say that it is fair that the wrong-doer should restore the thing that he has taken, and so put matters where they were before. But this is obviously to take a view which is quite inapplicable in most cases, and in all cases becomes inadequate when we take the moral view, and regard crime as an offence against society—not simply as a wrong to another individual.

For such reasons, it is apparently impossible to say that a legal punishment can be just, in the full sense in which the moralist would use the words. No doubt we may say,—and we wish that we could always say,—that a man "deserves" what he has got; and that implies that we recognise as desirable some satisfaction to our sense of justice. And, of

course, too, we demand that justice should be done in another sense of the word; that the case, for example, should be impartially investigated; that a man should not be punished severely because he is poor, or because he is unpopular, or let off easily because he is a private friend of the judge. Such demands mean that justice should not be perverted by applying irrelevant considerations; but they leave our previous questions untouched. The criminal law, from its nature, cannot impose equal penalties upon all men who are equally wicked; but only upon those who have made themselves liable: and that always involves elements of accident; it cannot take into account at all some of the elements upon which the depth of moral depravity essentially depends; and it is, at least, very difficult to say what specific meaning can be given to the proportion between crime and the suffering imposed upon the criminal.

If, then, the legislative action must, of necessity, be very imperfect from the moral point of view, we may try what will be the effect of dismissing the moral question altogether, or, at least, reducing it to a secondary place. We may, that is, consider crime not in so far as immoral, but in so far as mischievous. Here we have the doctrine worked out very consistently by Bentham and his followers. Pain, they said, is an evil, the only evil; pleasure, a good,

and the only good. To inflict needless pain—pain which does not cause a balance of pleasure—upon any one, be he a good man or be he a bad man, is, so far, wrong. For the same reason, it is justifiable, and, indeed, right, to inflict pain, so far as it prevents some greater evil. Hence, you should punish criminals just so far as the pain which you inflict is less than the pain which you prevent. It is wrong to give a single useless pang even to the worst of men. If (according to a sentiment attributed to Bentham) a fine of five shillings would prevent a man from committing murder, it would be wrong to fine him seven shillings and sixpence. This gives a justification of punishment, in so far as deterrent. It is obviously connected with another doctrine. A man is the best judge of his own pleasures and pains. Therefore, in so far as a man's actions affect himself alone, they are not to be forbidden by the law. We may think them bad or degrading; but so long as they do not affect others, the fact that a man chooses them is a proof that they give him pleasure; and we shall, therefore, only diminish the sum of happiness by interfering. Now, it is plain that this distinction does not draw the line between what is morally bad or good. Every habit which affects a man's own character, affects, also, his capacity to fulfil his duties to others. But this theory overlooks immorality, except

so far as it happens to involve certain extraneous consequences. We are, upon this showing, to punish a criminal precisely in the same spirit as we are to abate a nuisance. The thief is to be suppressed, as we are to extirpate a mischievous weed, and to be suppressed by just as much severity as is required for the purpose. The drunkard, so long as he confines himself to making a beast of himself in his own room, does his neighbours no direct injury, and must be left to enjoy the pleasure which is shown, because he chooses it, to be a pleasure to him. Of this theory, it may, I think, be said that, however imperfect, it is tolerably consistent, and, moreover, that it undoubtedly does express one legitimate end of punishment. There can be no doubt, that is, that the punishment of murderers may be rightly defended, among other grounds, at any rate, on the ground that it discourages the practice; though we may not fully agree with the famous saying of the judge, 'You are not hanged for stealing sheep, but hanged in order that sheep may not be stolen'. And, further, though there are various difficulties about the distinction between "self-regarding" and "extra-regarding" conduct, we must also, I think, allow, in general terms, that the fact that a man's conduct has a direct and assignable influence upon his neighbour's happiness, must always be one reason,

and, frequently, the only sufficient reason, for suppressing it by legal penalties.

This doctrine of simple deterrence, however, seems, to most critics, to be insufficient. It omits the moral element too completely. When a man is punished for some revolting offence, we are not simply providing him and his like with reasons for abstaining in future. We are, as a fact, exposing him to infamy, sometimes more painful to bear than the immediate penalty, and are thus, in fact, invoking the sanction of the moral sentiment. Therefore, it is urged, we must still, whether we like it or not, be moralists. The purely utilitarian argument has omitted one element of the calculation. The punishment not only deters offenders, but gratifies the feeling of resentment to moral indignation, which has been approved by many moralists. Hence, it is urged, besides the deterrent theory, we must make room for the vindictive theory. It is legitimate and right to hate crime, and, therefore, to hate criminals; and legal punishments are defensible, not merely as adding to the motives for refraining from crime, but as gratifying the desire for revenge, which, in early ages, was assumed in the rude modes of putting down violence, and which, even now, should be not eradicated but confined within legal channels and directed towards the desirable ends.

Postponing, for the present, a consideration of this proposed emendation, let us consider, a little more closely, the objection made to the theory of deterrence. In what way does it come into direct conflict with a moral theory of punishment? It looks upon immorality as mischievous, or as diminishing happiness; and upon the utilitarian view immorality means the diminution of happiness. Now, without discussing ultimate moral questions, I may assume that, for practical purposes, this seems to be a sufficiently tenable position. After all, we admit, to whatever school we belong, that crime is mischievous, and, whatever deeper meaning may be assigned to it, may be considered in that light by the legislator. He cannot—certainly he ought not to—forbid actions which do no harm to anybody, or which nobody, at the time and place, feels to be injurious to happiness. Even, therefore, if utilitarianism be unsatisfactory as an ultimate theory, it may represent adequately the point of view of the practical legislator. He tries to suppress violence and fraud because, as a fact, they cause what their victims unanimously agree to be painful consequences; and he need not look any further for a reason. People, it is said, have very different standards of pleasure. Still, we all dislike having our throats cut or our pockets picked; and that fact supplies a sufficient ground upon

which to base the whole criminal law. When we go a little further, a point of divergence may be noticed, a short consideration of which may help to clear the case. Let us assume the legitimate end of all punishment to be deterrence. It will follow, that we must annex as a consequence to crimes an adequate counterpoise, and a counterpoise not more than adequate to the criminal's motives. The fine to be paid must be just sufficient to prevent the transgression. Now, it has been urged, this necessarily implies a conflict with morality. The degree of moral guilt implied in a given crime varies inversely as the temptation. The greater the inducement to the offence, the less the wickedness shown in committing the offence. A man may have enough virtue to refrain from a gratuitous injustice, although he has not virtue enough to resist a large bribe, or the threats of a man in power. But, if the legislator is to provide simply a counterpoise, he will have to follow the opposite rule. The greater the temptation, the greater must be the force of the motive which must be added to counterbalance the temptation. If there be a crime by which a man might make a million of money, you must, if you would prevent it, hold out the prospect of such pains as would, in his estimation, be cheaply avoided at the sacrifice of a million; or, making allowance for the uncertainty of detection,

by the sacrifice of more than a million. But if, by the same crime, he only got a five-pound note, the prospect of paying a hundred pounds in case of detection might be a sufficient preservative of his honesty. Yet, the man who is tempted by the million gives less proof of dishonesty than the man who commits the same crime for a paltry five pounds. Therefore the punishment must be increased, as the wickedness is less.

I must first set aside one ambiguity which perplexes this argument. When we speak of a temptation as varying, we may mean one of two very different things. To say that I am more "tempted" than you to commit a given crime, may mean that the gain expected by me is itself greater; or, it may mean that I am more predisposed to the crime. I may be more tempted, let us say, to poison my uncle than you are to poison yours. That may mean that my uncle is a rich old sinner and I am his heir, whereas your uncle is a poor saint and you will get nothing by his death. Or it may mean that I am more tempted because, our uncles being alike, I am spiteful, and you affectionate, by nature. In the first case, to say that I am under the stronger temptation would, perhaps, tend to alleviate the gravity of my crime; in the second, it would simply be another way of saying that I was the greater brute. In both

cases, of course, it is true that the greater temptation would require the greater counterpoise. In one case, this only means that the worse the man, the stronger the restraints which he requires; and, if you could make different laws for bad men and good, it would follow that the bad would require the heaviest penalties. But this does not conflict with the moral view. It is no excuse for a murderer to say, "I am so blood-thirsty that I really could not help murdering". No contradiction to morality arises from punishing his crime more severely. In the other case alone,—the case in which we made distinctions founded upon the difference of surrounding circumstances,—it is true that we should, from the point of view of simple deterrence, require heavier penalties where the temptations were greater, and, therefore, the intrinsic malevolence proved to exist less.

For most purposes, this argument seems to have very little practical application. The law is made for people in general; we cannot have one law for bad men and another for good; partly because good and bad people do not carry about tangible marks of their quality written upon their faces. No doubt, indeed, the atrocity of a crime is recognised, if not by the general law, by the nature of the sentence. An assault may show unnatural ferocity or merely a rather excessive warmth of temper; and, though

the offence may be forbidden under the same clause of the criminal law, the judge may be empowered to give sentences of varying severity, varying more or less according to the moral depravity implied. So far, the worst offences (in a moral sense) get the heaviest punishment; and the deterring influence is rightly exerted by proportioning the penalty to the temptation, that is, to the predisposition to crime. The other case, again, requires some qualification. It is not true, as an absolute proposition, that the criminality is always, or generally, diminished, in proportion to the greatness of the temptation; for we must remember that both the temptation and the crime will generally be greater in proportion to the amount of mischief inflicted. It is more tempting, no doubt, to appropriate a thousand pounds than a shilling; but we cannot infer that the man who takes the larger sum is, therefore, less wicked; that he has a conscience which would have kept him honest under the smaller temptation, and has only yielded to the greater. Compare, for example, the case of the petty pilferer who appropriates my watch, with the case of the man of business who appropriates securities worth many thousand pounds and ruins widows and orphans by the dozen. We should all agree, I imagine, that the perpetrator of the more gigantic fraud would require the stronger deterring

motive to be kept straight. He is playing for heavy stakes, and we cannot hold out too strong a threat of infamy and suffering, if our aim is simply to prevent the crime. But neither, if we consider him from the purely moral point of view, would it be fair to argue that he was a better man than the pick-pocket, because the plunder which tempted him was greater. The opposite, I fancy, would be true. He shows a callousness to human suffering, and an amount of deliberate hypocrisy and treachery which proves him to be not only the more dangerous, but the more thoroughly corrupt of the two. The two ends of providing a sufficient counterpoise and of punishing the worst men most severely, would, therefore, coincide in this case also; and the argument that the greater temptation implies less wickedness is plainly inapplicable.

Without going further into this, which may briefly indicate some of the perplexities involved, I may mention certain cases in which there seems to be a real divergence of the two principles. There are cases in which the temptation may be fairly held to lessen guilt, and in which punishment has, notwithstanding, been made severer in consequence. The criminal law of the last century, for example, imposed a penalty of death upon persons who stole certain kinds of property left in specially exposed positions. The ease

of taking it would very possibly tempt to theft men who would elsewhere be honest; and it was sought to compensate for the strength of the temptation by more savage punishment of those who yielded to it. Or, again, there are certain problems of a similar kind connected with political offences. A man who gets up a rebellion from sincere political motives is generally far better morally than the man who gets up a rebellion for the sake, say, of simple plunder. Ought the motive to be allowed as an extenuation of the offence? It ought, it may be said, from a moral point of view; but, from the point of view of simple deterrence, we might rather consider that the patriotic rebel is the more dangerous person of the two, and, therefore, requires the prospect of at least as heavy a punishment to keep him quiet. So, again, it has been asked, whether it should be admitted as an excuse for a rioter, that he has joined in violent courses under threats from the riotous mob. This is, of course, an excuse from the moralist's point of view; the man is only attacking the police in order to save his own house from being burnt, not from a disorderly or disaffected spirit. But it is replied, from the deterring point of view, that, if such an excuse be allowed, you are ceasing to threaten at the precise moment when the threats are most required. If the law is not to press from one side,

all the pressure will come from the other, and every argument will be in favour of joining the side of disorder. Hence, it is argued, we ought to proportion the punishment, not to the offence, but to the temptation.

Now, I may say, very briefly, that such a divergence of the two principles appears to me to be possible; and, further, that cases may be put in which it might be necessary to deter, at all hazards, even to the neglect of moral considerations. A general who is defending a town must sometimes burn the houses of innocent people, without stopping to consider whether they can ever be compensated; and I think that there may be analogous cases even in regard to law, where the consideration of the absolute necessity of putting down mischievous conduct may override the normal moral considerations. But the general answer is, I think, different, and may help to clear the principle. The law to which I have referred, for the protection of exposed property, obviously suggests one remark. The true remedy for the evil would have been not to increase the penalty, but to increase the protection. You ought to have provided more watchmen, or to have forbidden owners to put temptation in the way of their neighbours, and not to have tried to make the hangman do the work of the policeman. So our ancestors erred when they protected their fields, not by putting

up fences, but by setting mantraps to mutilate occasional trespassers. In that, as in other cases, the mistake is to confuse between the deterring influence of punishment and the preventive influence of protective measures. Arguments, questionable when used on behalf of punishment considered as deterring, are perfectly applicable to the preventive measures. It is obviously right that such measures should be proportioned to the temptation. When a starving man steals a loaf, he is not so bad as a man who steals when he is not starving. We should, therefore, think it morally wrong to punish him as severely. But, if we thought that he ought not to have the loaf, we should take stronger precautions in proportion to the probable temptation. If, for example, we were sending supplies to relieve a starving district, it would be clearly right to send such a force with them as might prevent their appropriation by the strongest, or the first comers. But, at the same time, we should also think it right to save the men from temptation, by providing as much as possible against the danger of starvation. So, again, it would be monstrous to punish a poor man more severely than a duke, for stealing a watch; but, as a matter of prudence, I should take more precautions if I were dining in a poor public-house, than if I were dining in a ducal palace.

This suggests the true application of another doctrine, about the responsibility of society. Society, it is sometimes said, has no right to punish, because it ought to have suppressed the causes of crime. This doctrine is often stated very illogically, and would sanction a great deal of false sentimentalism. If society includes many corrupt and dangerous elements, that is no reason at all for not suppressing them by all available means. But, no doubt, it is a very good and sufficient reason for trying, as far as possible, to remove the cause as well as the effects; for getting rid of the temptations to crime, and training people so as to make them less disposed to crime, instead of simply punishing more severely those who have yielded to temptation and given play to instincts which have not been properly disciplined. This applies conspicuously to the case of the political criminal. It is generally essential to the welfare of a nation, that order should be preserved by a settled government. It is the duty of every government, not only to crush resistance, but to take such precautions as will make resistance hopeless. But a correlative duty is suggested when a rebellion actually occurs, and especially a rebellion which excites the sympathy of otherwise moral people. Such a case, that is, affords the strongest presumption that there are real grievances to be redressed, and that the rebel

should not be confounded with the vulgar criminal. It may be, and often is, quite necessary to shoot him down, so long as he is actively attacking authority ; but, when he is disarmed, he cannot be regarded simply as a thief or murderer, but as a man who has given a useful, though a disagreeable, hint that the times are out of joint.

I have gone so far into these questions—which might lead to a great many other problems of legal casuistry—with the desire of bringing out one essential part of the question. The difficulties which have arisen point, I think, to the impossibility of treating the problem exclusively, from a simple consideration of the deterring influence of punishment. That, however, remains an essential element. If the sole reason for punishing a sheep-stealer be not the prevention of sheep-stealing, that is, at least, a very excellent reason as far as it goes. But it seems to me an insufficient reason from the moral point of view, and, in particular, to fail in assigning a sufficiently distinct ground for determining the desirable degree of punishment. The principle was advocated as limiting the severity of the old laws ; but it is not quite easy to define the limit suggested. There is a necessary clumsiness about the method. A punishment only becomes operative in the cases in which the threat has failed to deter. The fact that a man has

committed a crime demonstrates the inadequacy of the system in his case ; we have not given him a sufficient motive for abstaining. When Bentham says, that if a fine of five shillings would prevent a murder, you ought not to fine the murderer seven and sixpence, he says what is, in a sense, obviously true. If I could prevent a murder, or, indeed, achieve any other desirable object, for a given sum, why should I throw away another penny ? But the fine is not inflicted till somebody has committed a murder, and, in that case, the threat of fining has obviously failed. The question arises, therefore, how far am I to go ? Am I to go on raising the tariff till murder becomes altogether obsolete ? But we have already got as far as capital punishment, without achieving that result. And, if we consider the case upon this method, we begin to find a difficulty in the method of calculation. We are to compare the pain inflicted upon the criminal with the pain saved to the victim. But the greater the pain inflicted, the smaller, according to the assumption made, will be the number of criminals, and the greater the number of victims saved. If we could adopt the Draconic system, and be sure of punishing every crime with death, crime ought to disappear ; for hardly anybody would break the law if he were quite certain of the gallows. But, in that case, the pain, both of the

criminal and the victim, would disappear, for there would be no one in either class. The result, therefore, would be a pure gain: no crime and no punishment. Against this practical conclusion, indeed, Bentham was one of the first to protest; and he uses one very sound argument. Punish all crime equally, he says, and you put a premium on the worst crimes. If both robber and murderer are to be hanged, the robber will have a good reason for destroying evidence, by adding the murder to the plunder of his victims. But, though the argument is very much to the purpose, it seems to make our calculations rather difficult. We cannot look simply to the deterring influence of a given punishment, but have to consider its place in the general tariff, and its influence in inducing people to prefer one variety of crime to another. And if we try to find our way out of this difficulty, we shall have, I think, to find that the mode of reasoning requires some modification.

The theory on which the calculation goes may, perhaps, be represented thus: It is supposed that by hanging a murderer, you prevent, say, ten murders which would otherwise happen. The suffering saved to the ten victims is greater than the actual suffering of the single criminal. Therefore, the infliction of the penalty gives a balance on the side of happiness. The argument seems to me to be sound as far as it

goes, and, in some cases, it would, I think, be sufficient. If, for example, it were proved that the use of a certain remedy, such as inoculation, caused a certain number of deaths, while, on the other hand, it prevented ten times as many, we should consider that a good case had been made out for its adoption. And, similarly, if we attended simply to the number of executions and to the number of crimes, and could make the necessary arithmetical comparison, we should be able to estimate the balance of good or evil in terms of pain and pleasure. But this mode of considering the case is obviously inadequate; and, indeed, Bentham (though I cannot now go into his teaching) feels and makes allowance for its inadequacy. For, to say nothing else, the mere deterrence of a certain number of crimes is an entirely insufficient measure of the effect of the law. The one obvious remark is that, by suppressing violence, you not only save a certain number of lives, but you secure an essential condition of all civilised life. I came here to-night without a revolver in my pocket; and I am not aware that I showed any particular courage by doing so. But it would have been foolhardy to have shown the same negligence, a few years ago, in some of the Western States of America. If I had lived in such conditions, I should not only have taken a revolver, but have, very possibly, thought

it a duty to join a vigilance committee, with a view to the suppression of crimes of violence. There are still regions where the fact that a man lives in a neighbouring village is a sufficient justification for shooting him down as soon as he comes in sight, for the simple reason that, otherwise, he would shoot you. So, when private war was still part of the regular custom, there was an obstacle which had to be crushed before any progress could be made in industrial development, which presupposes peaceful intercourse and mutual confidence. The formation of all that is meant by social order, the bringing about of a state of things in which men can meet habitually without fear or precaution, counting with complete confidence upon the absence of any hostile intention, is, obviously, an essential condition of everything that makes life worth living in a civilised country. The fact is too obvious to require much illustration; but it requires notice, for it is very imperfectly recognised when you regard murder, for example, simply as a kind of sporadic disease, which breaks out here and there, and can be kept within limits by killing some murderers, and so frightening other would-be murderers. The criminal law, no doubt, includes that consideration; but it includes infinitely more. It is a necessary corollary of that state of social relations which alone gives a secure

base for every conceivable kind of satisfactory social relation. It might, perhaps, serve as a sufficient defence of the old system, when, in the absence of any settled order, the system of private vengeance, of blood-feuds, and so forth, served to restrain the prevalence of actual violence. But it is a totally insufficient measure of the real advantage gained by enforcing order. We have to compare, not only the number of murders and the number of victims which would exist in a given social order, supposing the penalty to be inflicted or not inflicted; but to compare two radically different social states, and to ask, whether it is better to live in a society where peace is the almost invariable rule, and violence the rare exception, or in one in which there is a chaos of little societies, each of them being in constant fear of all its neighbours. The construction of a central authority which will keep the peace is a necessary part of the process of civilisation, and the criminal law is involved in the process. For, of course, it follows that, so long as anti-social elements exist within the borders of society, and some people resort to the old methods of the knife or the bludgeon, they must be put down; and the hangman and the jailer, clumsy as the action may be, represent the only kind of machinery which has hitherto been invented for the purpose.

It follows that we must understand "deterrence" in a wider sense than we have hitherto given to it. When we speak of punishment as deterring from crime, we must consider, not merely the effect upon the individual of the prospect of punishment following detection, but the total effect of a systematic adherence to the law upon the preservation of a peaceful state of society at large. We do not simply wish to provide a sufficient motive to decide the individual who is asking himself, shall I steal or not steal? but to maintain an organisation under which property shall be normally respected, and stealing become as exceptional as we can make it. This, in turn, involves much more than a simple execution of the criminal law; it involves the support of agencies for prevention, education, and reformation; though it does, also, involve an inflexible adherence to the criminal law. The law has to use rough means, and cannot possibly affect to adhere precisely to the moral deserts of individual cases. But it is justified by the simple ground that the only alternative is a chaos of barbarism. If you ask, therefore, in what sense is a criminal law just? we must confess that, in certain respects, it is impossible that it should be strictly just; it must deal with the found-out exclusively and with those who are found out in certain definite cases of criminality, and it must, therefore,

impose penalties which do not precisely correspond to the degree of criminality implied. But the relation to morality is, nevertheless, intimate. For the growth of the social order depends upon the growth of the corresponding social instincts; or rather, the two processes are correlative. If I love my neighbour I shall not wish to cut his throat; and, in order that I may love him, I must be pretty sure that he does not mean to cut mine. The external framework provides a protection under which the primary moral instincts can expand; and the expansion of the instincts supposes a correlative modification of the external framework. The moral requirement in regard to the criminal law is, therefore, essentially, that it should be such a law as is favourable, when considered in connection with the whole order, to the strength and development of the existing morality. If the criminal asks, How do you justify yourself for punishing me? the reply must be, Because the inflexible administration of the law is an essential precondition of the whole system, under which alone progress is possible. A society in which peace and order are preserved is superior, in morals as in other respects, to a society in which peace and order are made impossible by violence; and the suppression by punishment of offenders is involved in the system. The advantage of belonging to such a society is not to be measured

by counting up the working of individual cases ; but by the whole characteristics of the social state, taken as a whole, and including, as one essential part, the administration of criminal law in such a way as to be in conformity with the conditions of healthy social development. The difficulty, I think, though I can only indicate the argument briefly, results from a common illusion, which is illustrated by the once famous social contract theory. You suppose a number of independent individuals, agreeing to join and expecting to receive a precise equivalent for every sacrifice that they make in consequence. The reply is, that the individual is the product of the society, and it is a mere fiction to consider him as possessing any antecedent rights whatever. His rights are to be deduced from, not to supply the premisses for deducing, the social order. The only considerations which are relevant are those which affect the welfare of the social organism, taken as a whole ; and we must regard them as determined, before we come to the distribution of benefits and burdens among its constituent facts. Otherwise, we should be falling into the same fallacy as if we argued about the health of separate bodily organs, legs, and arms, and stomachs, as though they were independent things, fastened together to make a single machine. Since the leg implies the stomach, any consideration

of the leg's separate rights would be absurd. So the individual member of a political society cannot be regarded as though he had existed outside society somewhere, and was entitled to a precise equivalent for the sacrifice of his independence. The doctrine involves impossible considerations. I have to contribute to certain sanitary regulations, though I may be stronger or weaker than my neighbours, and therefore less or more in need of them. Or, I have to pay a school-rate, whether I have a dozen children or none at all. Do those facts give me a right to complain if I am taxed equally with my neighbours ? If so, every benefit which I receive from society must be set down as a separate item in an account to be balanced by itself. Obviously, the advantage which I receive in such cases is the whole advantage received from living in a healthy place or among educated people ; and it is essentially impossible to cut that up into a number of different bits of happiness conferred in return for separate payments on account. If I use the contract formula, I must interpret it to mean that amenability to various regulations, including the criminal law, is part of the whole bargain, which would have been made, if it had ever been real, when I decided, if I ever had decided, to join the society. The instinct for punishing criminals guilty of violence is one of the fundamental instincts of

civilisation, and we must accept it just as we accept any other fundamental instinct.

The question of justice, however, is not a whit the less essential because it presupposes this social characteristic instead of supplying the primary axioms from which it is to be deduced. It is undoubtedly of the highest importance that every difference in our method of treating different classes should have its sufficient reason, to be assigned as clearly as possible. The preservation of the peace is essential; but that does not settle the methods by which it is to be preserved.

On what ground, then, are we to deal with the problem of justice as regards different classes of crime? If the calculation of pain and pleasure, as already stated, seems to be unsatisfactory, what is the right principle of proportioning punishment to offence? I have noticed one argument which Bentham applied, and, as I think, with very good reason. To punish crimes equally, he said, is virtually to put a premium upon the worst. The "in for a penny in for a pound" maxim becomes at once applicable. Moreover, as every one now admits, the old brutal system is condemned by experience. To punish a great number of offences with death led to a mixture of excessive brutality with excessive uncertainty. The cruel punishment of some criminals was balanced

by the complete escape of others. But this practical failure clearly resulted, in great measure, from an obscure sense of justice. It was grossly unjust, it seemed, to hang a man for stealing a loaf, when you could only hang another for the brutal murder of his wife. The penalty in the first case, was, it was felt, altogether out of proportion to the offence. This instinctive sentiment was, as I think we all feel, substantially right. In any case, it would have to be taken into account by the legislator, for the obvious reason that punishments which outrun public opinion, tend to make martyrs of criminals. They are either not inflicted, or they set the sympathy of the people on the side of the offender. But to say this, is not to prove the sentiment to be just, only to take account of its existence. And the question, therefore, remains, how it is to be logically justified, for it may seem to imply the theory to which I have objected—the hypothesis of a sort of debtor and creditor account—of the old "eye for an eye" doctrine, which, as I have argued, involves a misconception of the true doctrine. My reply would be, in general terms, that the doctrine requires restatement, and, if properly stated, will not lose but acquire new forces.

Let us consider the consequences of my previous statements. The essential condition of social de-

velopment is enforcement, where necessary, of peace and order by adequate means. The criminal law corresponds to one part of this process. The whole social system includes machinery for prevention, for reformation and for education, as well as for punishment; and it is only when taken in its relation to other parts of the system, that we can give the full justification. Its methods are, as I have said, obviously full of imperfections, from the purely moral point of view. If we consider it as an isolated fact, comparably to the interference of a quasi-supernatural power, which clutches an offender here and there, and punishes him simply to frighten others, the arbitrary and unequal nature of the proceeding assumes an air of injustice. In fact, if you take the extreme individualist view, according to which each man is an independent unit, while society represents a force impinging upon him from without, it always becomes difficult to introduce the conception of justice without ending in the approval of anarchy. When, however, we consider the social organisation as including all the means of civilising society, of strengthening the general spirit of order, as well as acting upon the fears of the disorderly, we have to take wider considerations into account. We become sensible, in the first place, of the importance of the principle that punishment should never be sub-

stituted for prevention. Wherever it is possible to remove temptations, or take precautions which make crime impossible, we can have no excuse for adopting the blundering and unsatisfactory system of punishing those who have committed it. We admit, that is, that the criminal law, though absolutely necessary, is an essentially clumsy contrivance, to be used only when other methods fail. When certain punishments have been condemned as brutalising, it has been replied that the persons punished were already so brutal that it is impossible to make them worse. But the brutalising influence is even more objectionable as it applies to the legislator than as it applies to the criminal. To make up for neglect of appropriate precautions by severity against the offender, is to adopt the necessarily arbitrary method in which chance must always play a part in place of more effective and civilising methods. Frugality in applying punishment is desirable as a guarantee that we are acting in the proper spirit. An Indian official was asked why the native police were disposed to use torture for the detection of crime. The cause was, he said, mainly from laziness: it was so much easier to sit in the shade, rubbing red pepper in a poor devil's eyes, than to go about in a hot sun collecting evidence. So, it would be very much easier to inflict cruel punishment than to try to remove the causes of

crime ; and a resolution never to use the more brutal methods is not, as I think, to be regarded as a proof of weak sentimentalism, but as a judicious self-denying ordinance, imposed upon society by itself, as binding it always to adopt, as far as it possibly can, what is at once the more humane and the more scientific method. The same principle involves the careful graduation of punishment. There are, indeed, as I believe, though I cannot give reasons, cases in which crimes ought to be punished with death. There are persons of whom we may say that it would have been better, especially for their neighbours, if they had never been born. "I am worth inconceivably more for hanging than for any other purpose," said the heroic John Brown ; and the words may be applied, in a very different sense, to some of the wretches who occasionally make their appearance in the courts. To hang such a man is to act upon the assumption that murderers represent elements which are entirely and radically anti-social. The only remedy for them is extirpation. But, if this be admitted, it suggests a sufficient reason for not applying it to the cases of less gravity, in which such radical incompatibility has not been demonstrated. Punishment by death, even if necessary, is certainly a confession of impotence. We are admitting that we can do nothing better with the man than convert

him into a scarecrow for the benefit of his like. What more, it may be asked, can we do with a criminal? The obvious reply would be, reform him. Although no one can doubt that reformation would be an extremely good thing, wherever practicable, it may be urged that the enterprise is exceedingly difficult ; that, in many cases, it is hopeless ; and that we might spend our money and our efforts to better purpose upon more hopeful materials. And yet, I think that the answer is the true one, if properly understood, and will suggest the right meaning to be given to the word "deterrence". So long as we consider the individual case alone, and merely mean that we are giving motives to bad men for refraining from particular lines of conduct, the results, however desirable, are of limited value. But if we consider deterrence as including or coinciding with reformation, as indicating a part of the general system of moral pressure by which the classes exposed to temptation may be gradually raised in the scale of civilisation, we recognise an acceptable meaning. In fact, if we ask what is the deterring influence of punishment, we must observe that at one extreme it will always fail, or only induce a bad man to take precautions against detection ; and that, at the other end of the scale, there are a great many cases in which it does not come into active

operation at all. You and I, I hope, are not in the least disposed to assault each other, even though no policeman is present. The bare thought of resorting to violence, pelting me, say, with rotten eggs, has not even suggested itself to you, even though I may be making a very provoking use of my tongue. But there is also an intermediate class of people upon whom the possibility of having to appear in a police court, and the strong sense of shame attached to such appearances, is an active restraining force, tending to limit, and, in cases where the proper conditions exist, gradually to narrow, the sphere of violence. We, the peaceable and law-abiding citizens, have gained a right to those epithets, because we have lived in a sphere where the law has been habitually enforced. We have ceased to carry deadly weapons about us, and have established a general condition of good order. The deterring influence of the criminal law acts, or ought to act, by gradually spreading that state of mind through a steadily widening circle. The classes which are still in need of such a support to their moral instincts are clearly capable of reformation, whatever may be the case of some of the individuals who break the law. A fighting tribe, which has been in the habit of resenting every injury by the use of the knife, may learn, in a very short time, that a court of law settles disputes more agree-

ably than a free fight; and may become a most admirable and efficient part of the society to which it belongs. And the same may be said of large classes in our own society, which are perfectly capable of being converted into good citizens, though they may retain certain propensities developed under a rougher and more brutal system. To employ excessive and brutalising punishments in order to suppress small offences, is, therefore, to abandon the aim of civilising, to declare internecine war against the class, and to regard them simply as a nuisance to be abated. The effect might be, if the law could be carried out, to prevent a certain number of crimes; but it must also be to generate a more dangerous spirit in the class which you regard simply as dangerous, instead of regarding it as the possible raw materials of a more civilised and orderly society. Without attempting to dwell upon a familiar argument, I merely say that this view of the case implies that the governing power should be regarded, not simply as a machinery for catching and killing noxious criminals, but as a great civilising influence, suppressing all temptations to crime, where possible; preferring prevention, in every practicable case, to punishment, and making use of the clumsy, though necessary, weapons in the last resort; and acting by a steady and regulated pressure upon all

anti-social elements. It is only possible to give a satisfactory theory of the jail and the gallows, when you take them as a subordinate part of the system which includes reformatories and schools, and due precautions for the regular preservation of order. The ultimate criterion of justice is not to be found in any attempt to form a debtor and creditor account between the government and the individual; but in the civilising influence of the system, taken as a whole.

And, finally, I come back to the other theory which I have noticed. To supply the defects of the simply deterrent theory, it has been found necessary, as I said, to invoke the vindictive theory. We should go, it was suggested, upon the theory that a criminal is hateful, and, therefore, that it should be a pleasure to punish him. The feelings of resentment and moral indignation are parts of our nature, to which the punishment of the offender affords them a legitimate gratification. Now, to this, I should reply that, in the first place, I do not admit that the desire for revenge, as usually understood, can ever be legitimate. Revenge, as I understand the word, implies a personal feeling. It is taking pleasure in giving pain to a man because he has given pain to me. According to my view of morals, any pleasure in causing pain is, so far, wrong; and the public punish-

ment should be free from all personal motive. I quite agree with Bentham that we ought not to take a positive pleasure in the sufferings, even of the worst criminal; and to admit the legitimacy of such pleasure is to admit an element of pure sentiment to which it is difficult to assign any precise limits. If you allow yourself to hate a man so as to take pleasure in his sufferings, you might justify the infliction of superfluous torture and the old methods of hanging, drawing, and quartering. To do so is precisely to approve the ferocious old treatment, to which, as I conceive, the theory of simple deterrence was an excellent corrective, in so far as it at least implied a definite limit to the indulgence of fiercer passions. There is, however, I think, an element of truth in the doctrine. I admit, that is, that the punishment of a criminal should carry a moral approval, and not be regarded purely as a measure of convenience. Successful crime should be regarded with abhorrence. If a man convicted of a grave offence should be allowed to go without punishment, we should be rightly aggrieved. It is not, however, that we should take pleasure in his suffering, but that we should be pained by an example of the practical impunity of anti-social conduct. The escape of a murderer would, as we should feel, be a blow to the security of all innocent people. In that sense, we

may take pleasure in his punishment, not in the sense of positive enjoyment, but, certainly, in the sense of relief from positive sense of evil. It is, and should be, painful to see the rogues flourish and honest men droop, and to observe "captive good attending captain ill". But the pleasure of seeing the necessary equilibrium restored is different from the pleasure of dwelling upon the sufferings of the disturber. The practical difference is that, while we regard the infliction of suffering as necessary, we admit it to be a necessary evil, and are keenly alive to the inability of keeping it within the limits fixed by the general necessities of the law.

LUXURY.

PROFESSOR SIDGWICK has been discussing the ethics of luxury, and, according to his wont, has been giving fresh interest to a well-worn topic. I do not wish to dispute anything that he has said, nor do I hope to clear up problems which he professedly left unsolved. In one sense, they obviously cannot be solved precisely. Luxury is a relative term, which cannot be defined in absolute terms. A luxury, in the first place, is distinguished from a necessary. But, then, one man's necessary may be another man's luxury. My very existence depends upon conditions with which another man can dispense. If, again, we admit that there are many things which, though not absolutely necessary, may rightly be used, if they can be used without injuring others, we see that we must also take into account the varying social conditions. If we use luxury, in what Bentham called the dyslogistic sense, we must distinguish between necessities and superfluities, and then divide superfluities into comforts which may be rightfully enjoyed, and luxuries which cannot be enjoyed without in-

curing some degree of moral censure. But the dividing lines are always shifting. Scott tells somewhere of a Highlander sleeping on the open moor in a winter night. When he tried to roll the snow into a pillow his companion kicked it away, as a proof of disgraceful effeminacy. Most of us would come to a speedy end if we lived in a social state where such a standard of hardiness was rigidly enforced. We admit that some kind of pillow may be permitted, if not as absolutely necessary, as, at least, a pardonable comfort. We shall probably agree, also, that nobody is to be blamed for using clean sheets and securing a certain amount of warmth and softness—as much, at least, as is desirable for sanitary reasons. But if we endeavour to prescribe precisely how much may be allowed in excess of the necessary, how often we are to send our sheets to the wash, whether it is right to have lace upon our pillows, and so forth, we get into problems where any attempt at precision is obviously illusory. We are the more perplexed by the question, whether the provision of a bed for ourselves causes other people to go without a bed, and, perhaps, without supper, or how far we are bound to take such consequences into account. Without aiming, therefore, at an impossible precision, I shall try to consider—not what objects should be called luxuries, or comforts, or necessities, but what are the

really relevant considerations by which we should endeavour to guide our judgments.

Luxury is, as I have said, a well-worn topic. Saints and philosophers in all ages, have denounced the excessive love of material enjoyments, and set examples of a more or less thorough-going asceticism. It was—to go no further back—one of the favourite topics of our ancestors, in such papers as the *Spectator* and the *Rambler*. Addison, in his *Cato*, described the simple Numidian, whose standard appears to have resembled that of Scott's Highlander. The Numidian, he says, rests his head upon a rock at night, and, if next day he chanced to find a new repast or an untasted spring, "blesses his stars and calls it luxury". General Oglethorpe quoted this passage, in an argument about luxury, to Johnson, and added, "let us have *that* kind of luxury, sir, if you will". Johnson himself put down all this declamation as part of the cant from which we ought to clear our minds. No nation, he said to Goldsmith, was ever hurt by luxury. "Let us take a walk from Charing Cross to Whitechapel, through the greatest series of shops in the world: what is there in any of these shops (if you except gin-shops) that can do any human being any harm?" "I accept your challenge," said Goldsmith. "The next shop to Northumberland House is a pickle-shop." To which the excellent Johnson

replied, first, that five pickle-shops could serve the whole kingdom; secondly, that no harm was done to anybody either by making pickles or by eating pickles. I will not go into the ethics of pickles. I only quote this to remind you that this was one of the stock questions of the period; and not without reason. The denunciation of luxury was, in fact, the mark of a very significant tendency. Goldsmith had expressed the prevalent sentiment in the *Deserted Village*, as in the familiar passage beginning:—

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates and men decay.

And Goldsmith, like many contemporaries, was only versifying the sentiments uttered most powerfully by Rousseau in his famous exaltation of the ideal man of nature above the man of a corrupt civilisation. The theory has some affinity to the ancient doctrine already expounded by classical writers, according to which each form of government includes a principle of decay as well as of life. One stage in the process of corruption of Plato's ideal republic is marked by the appearance of the drones, people who take a surfeit of unnecessary pleasures, and, to obtain satisfaction, associate themselves with the fierce and rapacious. In Rousseau's time, this view became connected with the growing belief in progress and

“perfectibility”. It was a symptom of warning to the drones of his day. It showed that the thoughtful classes were becoming dimly sensible that something was wrong in the social organisation; and that a selfish and indolent aristocracy should be called upon to put its house in order. The denunciation of luxury meant, in short, that the rich and powerful were accused of indulgence in pleasures which they had not earned by services, but by the rigid enforcement of class privileges. Considered from this point of view, as the muttering of a coming storm, as the expression of a vague foreboding that the world was somehow out of joint, we may see more meaning than appears at first sight, in the old-fashioned commonplaces of our great-grandfathers. The language has changed its form; but the discontent at the misuse of wealth in various forms has certainly not diminished since that time.

Obviously, then, the question of luxury is connected with very wide and deep problems as to what is the proper use of wealth, and might lead us into ultimate questions as to the justification of the right to private property at all. I shall try, however, to keep as closely as may be to the particular aspect of such problems, which is immediately relevant to this particular question. And for this purpose, I think it will be convenient to take two points separately.

The objections to luxury may be stated either with reference to the individual or with reference to the society. That is to say, that if we consider a man by himself, we may ask with Johnson, whether expenditure upon pickles is injurious to the constitution, or at what point it becomes injurious. And, in the next place, we may ask whether, if we see our way to decide that pickles are wholesome as well as agreeable, some of us may not be getting more than our fair share of pickles, and so diminishing the total sum of pleasure, by inordinate consumption. First, then, I discard, for the moment, all social considerations. I take for granted, for the sake of argument, that my indulgence does no harm to any one else; that I am not depriving others of a means of enjoyment, but simply adding to my own; or, at any rate, that I am not, for the moment, to take into account that set of consequences. How far, on this hypothesis, or, say, setting aside all question of duty to my neighbour, should I be prudent in accumulating wealth? I sometimes amuse myself with the problem, How rich should I like to be, supposing that I were perfectly wise in that sense in which wisdom is compatible with thorough-going egoism, or with what is called enlightened self-interest? The obvious answer is that, in that case, there would be no limits to my desires. An imaginative American, we are told, de-

fined competence as "a million a minute and all your expenses paid". The suggestion is fascinating, but not, to my mind, quite satisfactory. It recalls a doctrine which used to be put forward by the old political economists. They had to meet the theory—a preposterous theory enough—of the danger of a universal glut; the danger, that is, that a nation might produce so much that nothing would have any value, and, therefore, that we should all be ruined by all becoming enormously rich. To meet this, it was often urged—along with more satisfactory arguments—that human desires were illimitable; and, therefore, that however rich a man might become he would always wish to become a little richer.

According to this doctrine, the desire for wealth cannot be satiated. The millionaire would still choose an extra half-crown rather than refuse it, although the half-crown brings him incomparably less additional pleasure than it brought him when his pockets were empty. But it is also true that long before we were millionaires, the pleasure obtainable by additional wealth may be infinitesimal, or absolutely non-existent. The simple desires may be easily saturated. Pope asks, "What riches give us, let us then inquire". And he replies, "Meat, fire, and clothes—what more? Meat, clothes, and fire." This is, in fact, a pithy summary of our most element-

ary and necessary wants. Now, our demand for meat is obviously strictly limited. As soon as we have eaten, say, a pound of beefsteak, we do not want more; by the time we have eaten, say, three pounds we do not only not want more, we loathe the very thought of eating. So, when we are clothed sufficiently for comfort and decency, more clothing is simply a burden; and we wish only for so much fire as will keep our thermometer within certain limits; a heat above or below would mean death either by burning or by freezing. Our ultimate aim, therefore, in regard to desires of this class, is not to increase the stimulus indefinitely, but to preserve a certain balance or equilibrium. If we want more food after our appetites are satisfied, it must either be with a view to our future consumption, which is still strictly finite, or else with a view to exchanging the food for something else, in which case it is desired, not as food, but as the means of satisfying some other desire. If, then, Pope's doctrine were really sound, which actually amounts to saying, if our desires were really limited to the physical conditions necessary to life, we should very soon reach the state in which they would be completely glutted or saturated. It may be worth while to note the circumstance which rather obscures our recognition of this fact. We may distinguish be-

tween the wealth which a man actually uses and that which remains, as I may say, only potential. A man may desire an indefinite quantity of wealth, because he may wish to have rights which he may yet never turn to actual account. There is a certain satisfaction, no doubt, in knowing that I have a vast balance at my banker's, though I have no desire to use it. I may want it some time or other; and, even if I never want it, I may enjoy the sense of having a disproportionate barrier of money-bags piled up between me and the yawning gulf of actual poverty. Therefore, though a very limited amount may be enough to satiate all our existing desires, we may like to know that there is more at our disposal. If possession carried with it the necessity of using our property, if we could not have potential as distinguished from actual wealth, we should be so far from desiring an indefinite increase of wealth that we should regard the increase beyond a certain limit as only one of two intolerable alternatives.

The question, therefore, How rich should I wish to be? requires an answer to the previous question, How rich can I be? A man, even if on the intellectual level of a savage, can be indefinitely rich in potential wealth: he may, that is, have a right to millions of pounds or be the owner of thousands of acres; but in order to use them he must have certain

capacities and sensibilities. It is a curious question, for example, how much of the wealth of a country would cease to be wealth at all if the intelligence of the possessors were lowered certain degrees in the scale? A large part of the wealth of England consists, I suppose, of machinery. If nobody knew more of machines than I do—and my whole notion of a machine is that it is something that goes round somehow if you happen to turn the right handle—all this wealth would become as useless as an electric telegraph in the possession of a hairy Ainu. And if nobody had any better artistic perception than mine, and we were therefore unable to see the difference between a Raphael and the daub in an advertising placard, the pictures in the National Gallery would have an average value, say, of eighteen-pence. A man, therefore, who is at the lower levels of intelligence is simply unable to be actually rich, beyond a narrow limit. The fact is occasionally forced upon us by striking examples. I heard the other day a story—I am afraid we all hear such stories too often—of a man who had become enormously rich by a freak of fortune. His only idea of enjoyment happened to be gin. He could, therefore, only use his wealth by drinking himself to death; a proceeding which he accordingly felt to be only a proper tribute to his improved social position. A similar

result happens whenever a sudden rise of wages to an insufficiently civilised class leads to the enrichment of publicans, instead of increased indulgence in refined and innocent pleasures. The man, in short, whose idea of pleasure is simply the gratification of the physical appetites in their coarser forms is incapable of becoming actually rich, because a small amount of wealth will enable him to saturate his desires by providing a superfluity of the material means of gratification. It is, perhaps, here that we may take into account the remark so often made by moralists, by Adam Smith among others, as Professor Sidgwick reminds us, that happiness is more evenly distributed among different classes than we suppose. The king, according to Shakespeare, cannot—

With all the tide of pomp

That beats upon the high shore of this world . . .

Sleep so soundly as the wretched slave

Who with a body filled and vacant mind

Gets him to rest, cramm'd with distressful bread.

The "body filled" and the "vacant mind" make up for the "distressful bread". It is as well, that is, to have no wants except the want of mere physical comfort, as to have higher wants and the means of gratifying them, and yet to be saddled with the anxieties and responsibilities which the higher position involves. The doctrine, "I am not really better

off than you," is, indeed, not a very graceful one from those who are actually better off. There was some excuse for the fox who said the grapes were sour when he could not get them; it argued a judicious desire to make the best of things: but if he made the remark while he was comfortably chewing them, by way of pacifying the grapeless foxes, we should have thought him a more objectionable hypocrite. The pauper may fairly reply, "If you really mean that your wealth brings no happiness, why don't you change places with me?" I will, therefore, not defend the statement, considered as an exhortation to content; but I accept it as a recognition of the obvious fact, that if happiness means a satisfaction of all our desires, a man of small means may be as happy as the man of the greatest means, if his desires are limited in proportion. But is it for our happiness to increase them?

Does our principle hold when we suppose a man to have the necessary sensibilities for the actual enjoyment of wealth? If he acquires the tastes which imply greater intellectual cultivation, a power, therefore, of taking into account sources of pleasure more complex and more distant in time and space, does it then become true that his power of using wealth will be indefinite? I should reply, in the first place, that we must still admit the same psychological

truth. Any desire whatever, that is, is capable of yielding only a strictly finite amount of enjoyment; the pleasure which we can derive from it must be limited both by the necessity of gratifying other desires and by the fact that no desire whatever is capable of an indefinite increase by increased stimulation. After a certain point of excitement is reached, we cannot get more pleasure by any accumulation of internal conditions. We assume for the present that our aim is simply to extract the greatest possible amount of gratification out of life. We must then take for our data our actual constitution, capacities, sensibilities, and so forth, and calculate how much wealth could be actually applied in order to keep us moving always along the line of maximum enjoyment. This would be to study the art of life on purely hedonistic principles. We should ask, what career will on the whole be fullest of enjoyment? and then, what material conditions can enable us to follow that career? I imagine that the amount requisite would vary indefinitely according to our characters. Suppose, for example, that a man has strong intellectual tastes, a love of art or science or literature. He will require, of course, enough wealth to enable him to devote himself without anxiety to his favourite pursuits, and enough, moreover, to train himself in all requisite knowledge. But granting

this, the material conditions of happiness will be sufficiently fulfilled. I think it was Agassiz who observed when he was devoting himself to science that he had not time to get rich. Wealth to him would have been rather an impediment than an advantage. A man like Faraday, who placed his whole happiness in the extension of scientific knowledge, and who was not less honoured because he lived upon a modest income, would not have had a greater amount of that kind of happiness had he possessed the wealth of a Rothschild. A man whose pleasure is in reading books, or contemplating works of art, or listening to music, can obtain the highest enjoyment at a very moderate price, and could get very little more if he had the most unbounded wealth at his disposal. If we inquired what men possessing such tastes had derived from them the greatest happiness, we should, I fancy, find ourselves mentioning men comparatively poor, whose enjoyments were even comparatively keen, because they had to devote a certain amount of care and contrivance to obtaining full play for their capacities. Charles Lamb, plotting and contriving to get an old volume from a bookstall, possibly got more pleasure from his taste than if he had been the possessor of a gigantic library. The sociable man, again, the man whose pleasure in society is the genuine delight in a real interchange of

thought and sympathy, who does not desire magnificent entertainment, but the stimulus of intimate association with congenial friends, would probably find the highest pleasure in comparatively simple social strata, where the display of wealth was no object, and men met, as Johnson met his friends at the club, to put mind fairly to mind, and to stimulate intellectual activity, instead of consuming the maximum of luxury. Milton's sonnet to Lawrence gives perhaps a rather severe but a very fascinating ideal of refined luxury:—

What neat repast shall feast us, light and choice,
Of Attic taste with wine, whence we may rise
To hear the lute well touched, or artful voice
Warble immortal notes and Tuscan air?
He who of these delights can judge, and spare
To interpose them oft, is not unwise.

Nor need we be accused of inordinate boasting if we should say that we would rather have made a third at such a feast than have joined a dozen rowdy courtiers at the table of Charles II.

There are, however, pleasures which undoubtedly suppose an indefinite capacity for using wealth. There is, for example, such a thing as the pure love of splendour, which is represented so curiously in some of Disraeli's novels. One of his heroes, if I remember rightly, proposed to follow the precedent actually set by Beckford, who built at Fonthill a

tower 300 feet high—not because it was wanted for any other purpose, but simply for the sake of building a tower. Of course, if one has a taste for towers 300 feet high, there is no particular limit to the quantity of wealth which may be found convenient. One of the gentlest and most delicate satirists of modern society, Mr. Du Maurier, has given us admirable illustrations of a more vulgar form of the same tendency in his portraits of Sir Gorgius Midas. When that worthy denounces his servants because there are only three footmen sitting up till two o'clock to save him the trouble of using a latch-key, we may admit that his pleasures, such as they were, were capable of finding gratification in any quantity of expenditure. It might be a question, indeed, if we had time to ask it, whether the pleasure derived from such expenses by the millionaire be really so great as the pleasure which he had when he first turned the proverbial half-crown, with which he must have come to London, into his first five shillings; and it is certainly also a question whether his expenditure was ethically right. But at present we are only considering facts, and we may admit that there would be no filling such a gulf of desire by any dribble of bullion; and, further, that there are pleasures—not, on the face of them, immoral—in procuring which any quantity of money may be spent. If a man is

simply desirous of obtaining influence, or, in some cases, political power; or if he decides to muddle away his money upon charity, there are no limits to the sums he may spend, especially if he has no objection to corrupting his neighbours.

Before saying anything upon this, however, I must pause to deduce a conclusion. Keeping still to the purely hedonistic point of view, I ask, At what point does expenditure become luxurious in a culpable sense? meaning by “culpable” not morally culpable, but simply injudicious from the point of view of enlightened self-interest. To this I think that one answer is already suggested, that is to say, that since, on the one hand, a certain finite quantity of wealth will enable us to keep to the happiest or most philosophic career; and since, on the other hand, a man may possess a quantity of superfluous wealth which he can only use on penalty of deviating from that career, he becomes foolish, if not immoral—upon which I say nothing—when he tries to use more. That people frequently commit this folly is undeniable. Wealth ought to be (I mean would be by a judiciously selfish person) regarded as a means of enjoyment. Therefore the superfluous wealth should be left in the potential stage—as a balance at his banker's or accumulating in the funds. But though the possession does not imply a necessity of

using, it does generally imply a sort of tacit feeling of responsibility—responsibility, that is, to a man's self. I have got so much money; surely it is a duty to myself to use it for my pleasure. So far as a man yields to such an argument, he becomes the slave instead of the master of his wealth. What ought to be machinery for furthering an end, becomes an end in itself: and, at that point of conduct, I think that we are disposed to call a man's life luxurious in a distinctly bad sense. The error, as I have suggested, is perhaps at bottom much the same as that which leads a poor man to spend an increase of wages at a gin-shop. But we do not call the gin-drinker luxurious, but simply vicious. For luxury seems to apply less to conduct which we can distinctly call bad in itself, than to conduct which only becomes bad or foolish as implying a disproportion between the end attained and the expense of attaining it. It applies when a man has, as we say, so much money that he does not know what to do with it. We speak of luxuries in the case of Sir Gorgius, where the prominent fact is that the man has been gorged with excessive wealth, and is yet too dull to use it in any manner which would increase the happiness of a reasonable or refined being. So it is generally regarded as characteristic rather of the upstart or newly-made millionaire than of the man born to higher

position, whose life is perhaps as selfish and hardly superior morally. But the nobleman by birth has inherited a certain art of life; he has acquired traditional modes of arranging his pleasures, which give him the appearance, at least, of possessing more judicious and refined tastes; and we are less shocked than by the man who has obviously wealth which he knows not how to use, and which he, therefore, deliberately devotes to coarse and vulgar ostentation. The upstart may not be more selfish at bottom; but he dashes in your face the evidence of his selfishness, and appeals for admiration on the simple ground that he has a larger income than his neighbours. Luxury means, on this showing, all such expenditure as is objectionable, not because the pleasure obtained is intrinsically bad, but because we are spending for the sake of spending, and could get more real enjoyment at a lower sum. I need not dwell upon the fact that men of moderate means may fall into the same error. The fault of exaggerating the importance of machinery is not confined to those whom we call rich. Thackeray's discourses upon Snobs are full expositions of the same weakness in the middle classes. When we read, for example, of Colonel Ponto being miserable because he tries to make an income of a thousand a year support the pomp accessible to persons with ten thousand, we see that he has as false a view as

Sir Gorgius of the true ends of life. And I refer to the same great satirist for abundant illustrations of the weaknesses which too often make society a machinery for wasting money on display, and entirely oblivious that it should be a machinery for the promotion of intellectual and refined pleasures.

Now, if I have given a fair account of luxury as considered simply from the point of view of an enlightened selfishness, I may proceed to the ethical question. So far, I have only asked, in substance, at what point our expenditure upon pickles becomes foolish. But, of course, the more important question arises, at what point it becomes selfish. A man may be silly for spending money upon erecting towers; but if he does no harm to his neighbours we hardly call him wicked. We cannot say that it is unconditionally wrong to build a tower. We must inquire, therefore, how far luxury necessarily involves a wrong to others. Here we must begin by listening to all the philosophers and divines of whom I spoke at starting. Any number of wise and good men will tell us, in various dialects, that pleasure is in itself bad, or, at least, that all the pleasures obtainable by wealth are bad, or, at any rate, beneath the notice of the higher spirits. There are the thorough-going ascetics, who strive, not to regulate, but to suppress all except the absolutely necessary physical instincts, and think

that even those desires savour of evil; who consider the best man to be the man who lives upon bread and water, and, if possible, upon mouldy bread and ditch-water. There are, again, spiritually-minded people, who consider all happiness to be worthless, except such happiness as results from aspirations to another world; who regard all riches as chains binding the soul to earth; who take the words "Blessed are the poor" in the most literal sense, as defining the true aim of life. We should seek, they say, for happiness elsewhere than in this transitory stage of existence, remember that the world is a mere screen hiding the awful realities of heaven and hell; and despise even such pleasures as are generally called intellectual pleasures, the pleasures, for example, of art or science, for they, too, belong really to the sphere of illusion, and are simply more subtle temptations than those of the flesh. And, besides these, we have the philosophers, who would have us live in the world of pure intellect, and tell us that the true moral of life is to make ourselves independent of external circumstances by suppressing all the corresponding desires. Renunciation, therefore, is the first lesson to be learned by the wise man; and the practical rule, as has been said, is that we should endeavour not to increase our numerator but to lessen our denominator. I cannot now discuss such doctrines. I am content

to say that I regard them not as simply false, but as distorted views of truth. For my part, I am content to say that, even as a moralist, I wish to see people as happy as possible; that being, after all, a poor utilitarian after my own fashion, I desire—however erroneously—the greatest happiness of the greatest number; and, in particular, that I should like to see, not a feebler, but a much keener appreciation of all the pleasures derivable from art, or science, or literature, or rational society, even, if I may say so, from good cookery and athletic sports. Briefly, the ideal society seems to me to be one in which even our lower instincts should not be suppressed, but regulated; and the typical man of the future to be one whose whole faculties and their corresponding sensibilities should be cultivated to the utmost possible degree. What is the application of this to our special question? I do not know that I can do better than refer to the writings of Bernard Mandeville, who in his *Fable of the Bees*—one of the cleverest books in the language—succeeded by the help of much paradox, and under a cloak of cynicism, in stating the problem with singular vivacity. Private vices, that was his way of putting it, are public benefits. His meaning, put less paradoxically, was this: accept, on the one hand, the ascetic doctrine that pursuit of pleasure is intrinsically vicious, and you condemn all the impulses

by which the structure of society, especially the industrial structure, has been built up. Accept, on the other hand, the doctrine that civilisation is, on the whole, a good thing, and you admit that the instincts, which, upon this hypothesis, correspond to private vices, are the only means of producing a public benefit. In other words, if we took the language of theologians in its natural sense, and really regarded the world as worthless, we should have no industry, no trade or commerce, and be still living in swamps and forests, digging up roots with our nails, living upon acorns and shell-fish, and scarcely even painting ourselves blue, for to the savage blue paint was a luxury. Now, apart from any question as to the fairness of this version of theological doctrine, we may ask, What is the real underlying difficulty—or that aspect of it which is still worth considering? We may grant, in the first place, to Mandeville, that, in point of fact, the construction of a civilised society presupposes the development of numerous desires, many of which are more or less condemned by severe moralists. If the savage comes to value blue paint, he may take to planting something to exchange for it, instead of simply lying on his back to digest his last handful of acorns; and, in so doing, he makes the first step towards the development of an industrial system. The

desire for wealth is, of course, implied in all stages of progress if men are to create wealth; and we can partly answer Mandeville's paradox by throwing over the ascetic and declaring that a desire for good meat, and fire, and clothes, even for pictures, and books, and music, or for such comforts as most of us enjoy, is not in itself immoral; and that, on the contrary, the more there is of such enjoyment the better for men's bodies and minds, and therefore, on the whole, the better for their morality. But the moral difficulty returns in a new shape. The desire for wealth, let us say, is not in itself bad; it is simply natural—it is a desire for one essential condition of a tolerably happy life. But is it not bad, in so far as it is selfish? Do not the desires which have been the mainspring of all modern development imply a desire of each man to get rich at the expense of others? Have they not been the source of all that division between rich and poor which makes one side luxurious and the other miserable? Has not Dives become rich and bloated by force of the very same process which has made Lazarus a mass of sores and misery? Suppress the desire for wealth, and we should still be savages "running wild in woods". But was not even the noble savage better than the pauper who now hangs on to the fringes of society? and is his existence compensated by the existence of other

classes who have more wealth than they can use? And so the old problem comes back; and we have, as of old, the most contradictory answers to the problem.

I am, I confess it, one of those old-fashioned people who believe in progress, and hold that their own century is distinctly better than any which preceded it; who would on no account go back, if they could, to the days of the noble savages or even to the brutalities and superstitions of the ages of faith. But I do not think that I need argue that question for our present purpose. We have got to this century somehow, and we can only get out of it by living till the twentieth. Meanwhile, we should make the best of the interval. I will, therefore, only permit myself one remark. If we suppose, with Mandeville, that the instincts which have developed modern society have been, to a great extent, selfish desires, that is, for the personal comfort of the agent, irrespectively of consequences to others, it does not follow that the corresponding development has been mischievous. Good commonplace moralists have been much in the habit of condemning the selfish passions of kings and conquerors. What can be an easier mark for denunciation than such a man, for example, as Louis XI. of France, and the wily and cruel rulers of past ages, whose only aim was to enlarge their own powers

and wealth? And yet, if we consider the matter historically, we must admit that such men have rendered enormous services to mankind. A ruler, let us say, had for his only object the extension and concentration of his own authority. Still, it was by the conflicts of rulers that the great nations have been formed out of a chaos of struggling clans; that peace and order, therefore, have been substituted for violence, throughout broad territories; that law has taken the place of private war; moreover, that the privileges of selfish orders have been suppressed through the development of a larger and more civilised national organisation; and that, although the immediate victory was won by the selfish ruler, the ultimate benefit has accrued to the people upon whom he was forced to rely for support against the oppressive subordinate powers. The ruler, perhaps, did not look beyond his own interests; but his own interest forced him to find allies among the mass of the population, and so gradually led to the formation of central organs, representing not the personal interest of the king, but the interest of the whole nation in which they had arisen. We may make a similar remark upon industrial development. The great merchant and capitalist and inventor of new methods and machinery has not looked, it may be, beyond his own interest; but, intentionally or not,

he was helping to construct a vast organisation, which, whether it has, on the whole, improved the world or not, has, at least, made it enormously richer. Perhaps Watt, when he was improving the steam-engine, thought only of the profits to be derived from his invention. But the profit which he gained after a laborious life was but an infinitesimal fraction of the enormous increase of efficiency which resulted to the national industry. We cannot doubt that the whole gigantic system which at least maintains a population several times multiplied, which maintains part of it in wealth and a large proportion in reasonable comfort, has been due to the labours of many men, each working for his own interest and animated chiefly by the desire of wealth. So much remains true of the economist's doctrine of the natural harmony between individual and public interest. In this case, as in the case of governments, we may, perhaps, say that men acted from motives which must be called selfish, in this sense at least, that they thought of little but their own interests; but that, at the same time, their own interests compelled them to work in a direction which promoted, more or less, the interests of others. I add, briefly, that these are only instances of what we may call the general rule: namely, that morality begins from an external or unrecognised conformity of interests, and

ends by recognising and adopting, as motives, the consequences which, in the earlier stage, seemed to be internal or accidental consequences. I begin by helping a man because circumstances make it useful to myself, and I end—and only become truly moral when I end—by doing what is useful to him, because it is useful to him. When, indeed, I have reached that point, my end itself is profoundly modified; it becomes much wider, and yet only regulates and directs to new channels a great deal of the corresponding conduct.

The consideration of this modification—of the change which should take place when a man not only pursues such conduct as is beneficial on the whole to a country, but pursues it with a view to the beneficial consequences—brings us back to the question of luxury. The bare pursuit of wealth as the end of existence implies, of course, indifference to the means by which it is produced; an equal readiness, for example, to grow rich by cheating my neighbour, or by actually producing a greater quantity of useful produce. It is consistent with a simple desire to enlarge my business without reference to the effect upon the persons I employ, as when manufacturers enriched themselves by cruel exploitation of the labour of infants. But if we hope for a state of things in which an employer should consider himself

as essentially part of the national organism, as increasing his own wealth only by such means as would be also advantageous to the comfort of the nation generally, the pursuit of wealth would become moralised.

Here, in fact, we must once more consider Mandeville's paradox. Desire for wealth, he substantially says, must be good because it stimulates industry. When your lazy barbarian, who has no pleasure but gorging himself with food, comes also to desire fine clothes, he is not only a degree more refined in his tastes, but his increased industry leads him to produce enough food to support his tailor, and provision is made for two men instead of one. But desire for wealth, it is replied, is bad, because it leads our barbarian not only to consume the product of his own labour, but to consume that of somebody else. Mandeville gained piquancy for his argument by confusing the two cases. Since the desire is good, all its manifestations must be good. Extravagance, for example, is good, and, as he put it, the fire of London was a benefit to industry because it set up a greater demand for the services of carpenters and bricklayers. I need not say how frequently an argument substantially the same has been adopted by good writers, and simple extravagance been praised because it was supposed to be "good for trade".

Political economists have been forced to labour the point that extravagant consumption does not increase wealth; but the only curious thing is that such a point should ever have required demonstration. The conclusion, which is sufficient for our purpose, is simply that an absolute denunciation or an absolute exaltation of the desire for wealth is equally impossible; for the desire may have contrary effects. In one shape it may stimulate to enjoyments which actually diminish wealth in general, or, at any rate, to those which lead to the actual exploitation of the many for the benefit of the few; and, on the other hand, to denounce it, simply would be to denounce all the springs of action which raise men above the barbarous state of society. When we look at the contrasts between the rich and the poor, we must rightfully desire a greater equality of distribution; but we may be tempted to approve too easily any means which may lead to such equality. It is, indeed, obvious that if all the national resources which are now applied to producing superfluities could be turned to the production of necessities, we could support the same population in a greater comfort, or support a much greater population at a point just above starvation level. But it does not at all follow that a society in which every man's labour was devoted entirely to the task of providing neces-

saries would in fact be either more comfortable or more numerous. Historically speaking, the fact is the very reverse. The only societies in which there is such an equality are societies in which the level is one of uniform misery, and whose total industrial efficiency is incomparably smaller than that of the more civilised races. It has been only in so far as a nation has been able to support classes with sufficient means to devote themselves to science and art, and the cultivation of the higher faculties generally, that it has acquired the vast powers of production which enable some to be disproportionately rich, but which also enable numerous masses to support themselves in tolerable comfort where there were once a few wandering barbarians. That the more cultivated classes have sought only their own advantage instead of the general benefit, may be too true; but the conclusion is, not that they should cease to have the desires which entitle a man to be called a civilised being, but that these desires should be so regulated and moralised as to subserve directly and necessarily the ends which they have only promoted indirectly and accidentally. A society which has grown rich by mechanical discoveries and industrious organisation has acquired the power of greatly raising the average level of comfort. If, in point of fact, its power has been greatly misused, if a great development of

poverty has taken place side by side with a great development of industrial efficiency, the proper inference is not that we should denounce the desires from which the efficiency is derived, but that we should direct them into such channels as may lead to the more universal distribution of the advantages which they create.

It is, I think, from this point of view that we can best judge of the moral objection to luxury. For, as I previously suggested, luxury begins when a man becomes the slave instead of the master of his wealth; when that which ought to be a mere machinery becomes an end in itself; and when, therefore, there is a tendency to cultivate and stimulate to excess those lower passions which, though necessary within limits, may beyond those limits distort and lower the whole character, and make the pursuit of worthy objects impossible. We know that the king who had the reputation of being the wisest of mankind, after building a splendid temple and a gorgeous palace, and filling them with vessels of gold, and importing ivory and apes and peacocks, could find nothing better to do with the rest than to take 700 wives and 300 concubines—a measure which hardly increased his domestic felicity, but no doubt got rid of a good deal of money. Although few men have Solomon's opportunities of affording a

typical instance of luxury, many of us show ourselves capable of weakness similar at least in kind. I need not multiply examples. The great mystery of fashion is perhaps a trifling but a significant example. When people, instead of considering dress as a means of displaying the beauty of the human frame, consider their bodies as mere pegs upon which to display clothes, and are ready to distort their own forms to fill arbitrary shapes, changed at short intervals to increase the cost, they are clearly exemplifying the confusion between means and ends. When a young gentleman spends a fortune upon the turf, or upon gambling, he shows that he has no more conception than the poor boy who plays pitch-and-toss with halfpence of the ways in which wealth might be made conducive to undertakings worthy of absorbing human energy. When, on pretence of cultivating society, we invent a whole cumbrous social apparatus which makes all rational conversation impossible, we know that the display of wealth has become an end to which we are ready to sacrifice our ostensible purpose. Now, I suggest that such luxury, such exaltation of the machinery above the ultimate good, corresponds pretty nearly to the distinction between the desires which lead to the rightful use and those which lead to the shameful misuse of wealth in a social sense. Human nature,

indeed, is singularly complex, and it is impossible to deny that the hope of acquiring such luxuries may incidentally lead to that increase of industry and development of national resources which, as we have seen, is the ground upon which it is defended. The industrious apprentice may have been stimulated to become Lord Mayor by the odours from his master's turtle-soup; Arkwright, perhaps, was induced to invent the machinery which revolutionised the cotton manufactures by the hope of becoming Sir Richard, and rivalling the coarse luxury of some stupid Squire Western. But we cannot doubt that upon a large scale the love of the grosser indulgences is bad, even from its purely economical point of view. If, incidentally, it encourages industry, it far more directly and necessarily encourages wasteful expenditure. If a rich man can only spend his thousands at a gambling-table, the poorer man cannot be blamed for gambling with a thimble-rigger. When Solomon set up his domestic establishment, every shopkeeper in Jerusalem might be encouraged to marry an extra wife. If a rich man, who has enough to saturate a healthy appetite, tries how much money he can spend, like the old classical epicures, upon new dishes of nightingales' tongues, you can hardly expect the poorer man to refrain from an extra glass of gin. Briefly, so far as the resources

of a nation are spent upon the mere ostentation—which we call vulgar, to imply that it is spending for the sake of expense, foolishly trying to get more pleasure for an appetite already gorged to excess, by simply increasing the stimulus—it is encouraging all the forces which make rather for waste than increased productiveness, and justifying the natural jealousy of the poorer. So far, that is, as a desire for wealth means a desire to consume as much as possible on supersaturating the lower appetites, the commonest argument against private property in general is not only plausible but justified. I should say, then, that luxury in a bad sense begins wherever in expenditure it indicates an insufficient sense of the responsibility which attaches to all wealth. This does not condemn an expenditure which may seem, from some points of view, luxurious; though, as I have said, I cannot profess to draw any distinct line in what is essentially a question of degree and of actual possibilities. I can only suggest in general that a man is *primâ facie* justified in all such expenditure as tends to the highest possible cultivation of his faculties and of the faculties of those dependent upon him. I hold it to be a matter of the highest importance that there should be a thoroughly civilised class—a class capable of all intellectual pleasures; loving the beauties of art and nature; studying every possible

department of knowledge, scientific and historical; maintaining all such modes of recreation and social enjoyment as are naturally appropriate to such a class. And I do not call any man luxurious for maintaining his position in such a sphere, or for enabling his children to follow in his steps. I believe that, as things are, the existence of such a class is a necessary condition of national welfare and of the preservation and extension of the whole body of cultivation which we have received from our ancestors. What is requisite is, that the class should be not only capable of refined enjoyment, but of discharging its functions relatively to the nation at large, and spreading a higher standard of enjoyment through the whole community. So far as the richer class maintains certain traditions, moral and intellectual—traditions of personal honour and public spirit, of artistic and literary cultivation—it may be discharging an invaluable function, and its existence may be a necessary means of diffusing a higher civilisation through the masses who have not the same advantage. Whatever employments of wealth contribute to make a man more efficient as an individual member of society, to strengthen his understanding and his perceptions, to widen his intellectual horizon and interest his sympathies, and the enjoyments which correspond to them, are not to

be condemned as luxurious. They are, at present, only within the reach of the richer classes, ardently as we may hope that the power of partaking them may be extended as rapidly and widely as possible. But the growth of luxury, in the bad sense, is the indication that the class which should act as the brain of the social organism is ceasing to discharge its functions, and becoming what we call a survival. It is a kind of moral gout—an aristocratic disease, showing that the secretions are becoming disordered for want of a proper application of the energies. It was in that sense, as I said before, that our grandfathers denounced the luxury which proved that the ruling classes, especially in France, had retained their privileges while abandoning the corresponding duties. If in England we escaped so violent a catastrophe, it was because, with all their luxuries and levities and shortsightedness, the aristocratic classes were still playing an active part, and, if not governing well, doing whatever was done in the way of governing. But every class, and every member of a class, should always remember that he may be asked whether, on the whole, he and his like can give any sufficient reason for his or their existence, and that he ought to be prepared with a satisfactory answer. When he has to admit that his indulgences are in the main what may be called luxuries in the

bad sense, he may consider that he is receiving notice to quit.

This may suggest the last remark that I need make. It is impossible, I have said, to say definitely this is, and that is not, a luxury : and, in general, that is not the way in which the question presents itself. We have rather to decide upon our general standard of life, and to adopt a certain scale of living more or less fixed for us by our social surroundings. We can all do something towards rationalising the habitual modes of expenditure, and adapting the machinery to such ends as are worthy of intelligent and cultivated beings. So far as inclination is in the direction of vulgarity, of ostentatious habits, of multiplying idle ceremonies and cumbrous pomposities, we can protest by our own conduct, at least, in favour of plain living and high thinking. But so far as social life is really adapted to the advancement of intellect, the humanising and refinement of our sympathies, it promotes an improvement which cannot but spread beyond the immediate circle. Even such pursuits, it is true, may incidentally become provocative of an objectionable luxury. A man who is a lover of art, for example, occasionally shuts himself out all the more from the average sympathies, and indulges in pleasures, less gross but, perhaps, even more enervating than some which we should call distinctly sensual.

The art, whether literary or plastic, which is only appreciable by the connoisseur, is an art which is luxurious because it is on the way to corruption. Nothing is clearer in the vague set of guesses which pass for æsthetic theory, than this : that to be healthy and vigorous, art must spread beyond cliques and studios, and express the strongest instincts and emotions of the society in which it is developed. This, I think, is significant of a general principle. Luxury is characteristic of a class with narrow outlook, and devoted to such enjoyments as are, by their nature, incapable of communication. Whenever the enjoyments are such as have an intrinsic tendency to raise the general standard, as well as to heighten the pleasure of a few, they cannot be simply stigmatised as luxurious. The old view of the responsibilities of wealth was chiefly confined to the doctrine that the rich man should give away as many of his superfluities as possible, to be scrambled for by the poor, in order to appease the Fates. We have come to see that charity, though at present a necessary, should be regarded as a degrading necessity ; and, therefore, not in the long run a possible alternative to luxury. Too often it is itself a kind of luxury as mischievous as selfish disregard to the natural consequences of our expenditure. The true direction of our wishes should rather be to direct social energies into such channels

as have a natural affinity to public spirit. A man who really loves art because he has a keen sense of beauty, not because he wishes to have the reputation of a skilful collector, would surely try to beautify the world in which we all live, to get rid of the hideous deformities which meet us at every turn, and not simply to make a little corner into which he may retire for simple self-indulgence. A lover of truth should not be content, as some philosophers were forced to be content, with discussion in an esoteric circle, but should endeavour, now that thought is free, to stimulate the intellectual activity of all men, confident that the greater the number of investigators, the more rapid will be the advance of truth. I do not venture to suggest what special direction should be taken by those who have the privileges and responsibilities of great wealth. I have never had to consider that problem in any practical reference. Still, considering how vast a part they actually play in social development, how great is their influence, and how many people and enterprises seem to be in want of a little money, I cannot help fancying that a rich man may find modes of expenditure other than reckless charity or elaborate pampering of his personal wants, which would be not only more useful to the world, but more interesting to himself than many of the ordinary forms of indulgence. But I am

only speaking of general tendencies, and have disavowed any capacity for laying down precise regulations. If I have stated rightly what is the evil properly attacked when we speak of luxury as vicious, it will, I think, come mainly to this: that the direction in which we should look for improvement is not so much in directly prescribing any Spartan or ascetic system of life, as in cultivating in every one who possesses superfluities, the sense of his implicit responsibility to his fellows, which should go with every increase of wealth, and the conviction, not that he should regard pleasure as in itself bad, but that he should train himself to find pleasures in such conduct as makes him a more efficient member of the body corporate of Society. If, indeed, there should be any man who feels that he has no right to superfluities at all, while so many are wanting necessities, and should resolve to devote himself to the improvement of their elevation, I should say, in the first place, I fully and heartily recognise him to be one of the very large class which I regard as my superiors in morality; although, in the next place, I should insinuate that he is one of those heroes who, while they deserve all honour, cannot be taken as models for universal imitation, inasmuch as I cannot help thinking that the ultimate end is not the renunciation but the multiplication of all innocent happiness.

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THE DUTIES OF AUTHORS.

I PROPOSE to speak to you to-day upon a subject which, though I may perhaps be tempted to exaggerate its importance, possesses some real importance. I have undertaken to speak upon the duties of the class to which I belong. I make, however, no claims to the position of censor. I have no such claim, except, indeed, the claim of possessing some experience. There are two ways, I may observe, in which a man may acquire a sense of the importance of any moral law. One is by keeping the law, and the other is by breaking it. In some ways, perhaps, the systematic offender has acquired the most valuable experience. No one can speak more feelingly about the evils of intemperance than the reformed drunkard, unless it be the drunkard who has not reformed. The sober gentleman who has never exceeded can realise neither the force of the temptation nor the severity of the penalty. On the other hand, I must admit that some writers upon ethical questions have been men of fair moral character. I only make the statement by way of

explaining that, in speaking of the duties of authors, I do not assert, even by the most indirect implication, that I personally have either observed or disregarded the principles which I shall discuss. Whether I am a model for imitation or an example of the evils to be avoided, matters nothing to this discourse; though the question to which of these classes I belong has a certain interest for myself.

There is one other matter which I can deal with very briefly. I have said that the subject has a certain importance. Upon that it is needless to dilate; for, in the first place, authors have been engaged for generations, and never more industriously than in this generation, in preaching the vast importance of authors to mankind. I could not hope to add anything to their eloquence upon a topic with which they are so familiar. We may, however, assume that the enormous mass of literature which is daily produced, whether its abundance be a matter of regret or exultation, is at least a proof that a vast number of people read something, and are, we may suppose, more or less affected by what they read. It cannot be indifferent to inquire what are the duties of those who undertake to provide for this ever-growing demand.

One matter has been lately discussed which may serve as a starting-point for what I have to say. A

French author who came the other day to observe our manners and customs, was impressed by the fact that so much of our writing is anonymous. The public, that is, reads without knowing who are its instructors, and the instructors write without incurring any definite personal responsibility. The problem is naturally suggested, whether such a system be not morally objectionable. Ought not a man who undertakes to speak as an authority let us know who he is, and therefore with what authority he speaks? The question could hardly be answered satisfactorily without some study of the facts; and especially of the way in which the system has grown up. I can only notice one or two obvious reflections. A century ago we boasted—and we had reason to boast—that the English Press was the freest in Europe. It was already a very important factor in political life. But at that period the profession of letters was still regarded as more or less disreputable. The great author—the poet, divine, or historian—was indeed fully as much respected as he is now; but to write for money or to write in periodicals was held to be not quite worthy of a gentleman. Byron, for example, refused to take money for his poetry, and taunted others for taking money, until so much money was offered to him that he swallowed his scruples. Burns, though as much in need of money,

had shortly before refused to write for money; and Wordsworth held that his high calling imposed upon him the duty of rather repelling than seeking the popularity by which money is to be won. We have changed all this, and the greatest modern authors are less apt to disavow a desire for pay, than to complain that their pay is insufficient. The employment—it can hardly be called the profession—of periodical writing, again—the only kind of writing which could make literature a source of a regular income—was long regarded as a kind of poor relation of the respectable or so-called learned professions, clerical, legal, and medical. Jeffrey, whose fame now rests upon his position as the editor of *The Edinburgh Review*, was for a long time anxious to conceal his employment as not exactly creditable. In the year 1809 the benchers of Lincoln's Inn passed a resolution that no one should be called to the Bar who had written for money in a newspaper. Writers in newspapers since that time have frequently risen to the Bench, and have been not the least honoured of Cabinet Ministers. Yet the sentiment which involved a certain stigma has only disappeared in this generation. And the historical cause seems to be obvious. The newspaper Press had gradually grown up in spite of authority. It had first been persecuted, and writers had escaped persecution by consenting to be spies or

dependants upon great men. Half the hack-authors aspired to subsidies from the secret-service money, and the other half were looking for a reward when their patrons should have a turn in the distribution of good things. The Press was freer than elsewhere, for the English system of government gave importance to public discussion. Both Ministers and Opposition wished to influence voters through the papers. But the authors were in the position of dependent auxiliaries, prosecuted for libel if they went too far, and recompensed by pensions for the risks they had to run; they were despised, even by those who used them, as a set of mercenary guerillas, employed to do dirty work and insinuate charges which could not be made by responsible people, and ready, as was supposed, to serve on whichever side would pay them best. According to a well-known anecdote, two writers of the eighteenth century decided by the toss of a halfpenny which should write for Walpole and which should write for his adversary Pulteney; but the choice was generally decided by less reputable motives. Now, so long as the Press meant such a class it was of course natural that the trade should be regarded as discreditable, and should be carried on by men who had less care for their character than for their pockets. In England, where our development has been continuous and traditions linger long,

the sentiment long survived; and the practice which corresponded to it—the practice, that is, of anonymity—has itself survived the sentiment which gave it birth.

I do not, indeed, mean to insinuate that the practice may not have better reasons than that which led to its first adoption. The mask was formerly worn by men who were ashamed of their employment, and who had the same reasons for anonymity as a thief or an anarchist may have for a disguise. It may now be worn even by men who are proud of their profession, because the mask has a different significance. When a journalist calls himself "we" instead of "I," the word really represents a fact: the fact that he speaks not simply as an individual, but as the mouthpiece of a corporation, which itself claims to be the organ of a party. The plural covers whatever additional weight may be due to this representative character. To consider the value of this justification would take me too far. I have spoken of this historical fact because I think that it illustrates a more general problem.

For, in the first place, I think that there were some elements in the older sentiment which deserved respect. When an author was as anxious to disavow the charge of writing for money as an author at the present day is to claim his reward, I cannot, for my

part, simply set him down as silly. "My songs," said Burns, "are either above price or below price, and, therefore, I will accept nothing." I respect his feelings. He may not have been quite logical; but he was surely right in the belief that the poet whose inspiration should come from his breeches-pocket would never write true songs or embody the very spirit of a nation. I do not doubt that authors ought to be paid; but I certainly agree that a money reward never ought to be the chief aim of their writing. And I confess that some utterances about copyrights in these days have jarred upon me, because they seem to imply that the doctrine is not disavowed so unequivocally as it should be by our leaders. I am, indeed, happy to believe, as I fully believe, that there has never been a time at which more good work has been done for pure love of the work, independently, and even in defiance, of pecuniary considerations. But I cannot help thinking that in their desire to establish a right to the profits of their work, authors have condescended at moments to speak as if that reward constituted their sole motive to work, instead of being desired—as it may most properly be desired—simply as the means of enabling them to work. The old contempt was aristocratic, and in these days we have come to use aristocratic as a term of abuse. My own impression

is that we ought to be just even to aristocrats; and in that contempt for all such work, I think that there was a genuine element of self-respect. The noble despised the poor scribe who had to get his living by his pen. We, my lords, as Chesterfield put it, may thank Providence that we do not depend upon our brains. It is wrong, no doubt, to despise anybody; and especially mean to despise a man for poverty. But the sentiment also included the belief—surely not so wrong—that the adventurer who joined the ranks of a party for the sake of the pay was so far contemptible, and likely to join the party which paid best. The misfortune, no doubt, was that the political state involved such dependence; and the desirable solution that every one should become independent. Till that solution was more or less reached, the corresponding sentiment was inevitable, and not without meaning.

Well, the literary class has had its declaration of independence. An author has long ceased to need a patron, and he is in little danger of the law of libel. The question occurs: What are the qualities by which we should justify our independence? Have we not still a certain stoop of the shoulders, a kind of traditional shamefacedness, an awkwardness of manner, and a tendency to blush and stammer, which shows that we are not quite at ease in our new

position? Or have we not—it is a more serious question—exchanged dependence upon the great for dependence upon the public, rather than learnt to stand upon our own feet? Have we made ourselves, and, if we have not, how can we make ourselves, worthy of our position as free men? We boast that the Press does part of what used to be done by the priesthood, that we enlighten and encourage and purify public opinion. There is a whole class which depends upon us for intellectual culture; which reads nothing that is not in newspapers and magazines. Do we give them a wholesome training, provide them with sound knowledge, and stimulate them to real thought? Are we such a priesthood as is really raising the standard of human life; or such a priesthood as is clinging to power by echoing the superstitions of its congregations? Nature is ruled by obeying her; and what is called ruling public opinion is too often servilely following its dictates. There is an old story which tells how a certain newspaper used to send out an emissary to discover what was the common remark that every one was making in omnibuses and club smoking-rooms, and to fashion it into next morning's article for the instruction of mankind. The echo affected to set the tune which it really repeated. Now, there is nothing more flattering than an echo. "This must be an inspired
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teacher, for he says exactly what I thought myself," is a very common and effective argument. To reproduce the opinions of the average reader; to dress them so skilfully that he will be pleased to see what keen intelligence is implied in holding such opinions; to say just what everybody wishes to have said a little more neatly than everybody could say it, or, at the outside, to say to-day what every one will be saying to-morrow, is one path to success in journalism. There is, I am afraid, much so-called education which tends to nothing better than a development of this art. I was consulted the other day by a young gentleman who was proposing to put himself under a professor of journalism. So far as I could gather from his account, the professor did not suggest that the pupil should study any branch of serious knowledge: that he should become, for example, a good political economist, or read ancient or modern history, or make himself familiar with continental affairs or bimetallism, or other thorny and complex subjects. The aim was precisely to enable him to dispense with all study, and to spin words out of absolute mental vacuity. If such an art can really be acquired, it is scarcely an art to be recommended to ingenuous youth. And yet, as I understand, it is an art which is more or less countenanced even at our universities. A distinguished classman learns

much, but the last thing he learns is the depth of his own ignorance. He is too often practised in the power of beating out his gold or his tinsel to cover the largest possible surface; he becomes an adept in adopting the very last new fashion of thought; he can pronounce dogmatically upon all previous thinkers after reading not their own works, but the summary given in the last text-book. Success in the art of passing examinations requires the same qualities which enable a man to write off-hand a brilliant leading article upon any side of any subject. I have often heard remarks upon the modern diffusion of literary skill. Ten people, it is said, can write well now for one who could write well fifty years ago. No doubt the demand for facile writing has enormously increased the supply. But I do not think that first-rate writing—the writing which speaks of a full mind and strong convictions, which is clear because it is thorough, not because it is shallow—has increased in the same proportion, if, indeed, we can be sure that it has increased at all. Perhaps there are ten times as many people who can put other men's thoughts into fluent phrases; but are there ten times as many, are there even as many, who think for themselves and speak at first hand? The practice of anonymous writing affords, of course, obvious conveniences to a superficial omniscience. The young gentleman who

dogmatizes so early might blush if he had to sign his name to his audacious utterances. His tone of infallibility would be absurd if we knew who was the pope that was promulgating dogmas. The man in a mask professes to detect at a glance the absurd sophistries which impose upon the keenest contemporary intellects; but if he doffed the mask and appeared as young Mr. Smith, or Jones, who took his degree last year, we might doubt whether he had a right to assume so calmly that the sophistry is all on the other side. I am, however, quite aware that this is only one side of the question of anonymity. Were the practice abolished, the journalist who was forced to appear in his own character might abandon not his superficiality, but whatever power of blushing he retains. The more fluent phrase-monger might take himself even more seriously than he now does, and might persuade other people to take him seriously too. The charlatan, in short, might have a better chance, and use his notoriety as a stepping-stone to more mischievous ambition.

I refrain from discussing this question: the rather because it is obvious that such changes must work themselves out gradually, and that we may assume, for the present, that the position will not be materially changed. I am, therefore, content to infer that the journalist should at least bear in mind one obvious

criterion. He should never say anything anonymously to which he would be ashamed to sign his name. I do not mean merely that he should not be libellous or spiteful—I hope and believe that the underhand assassin of reputations, who at one period was common enough, has almost ceased to exist,—but rather that he should refrain from that pompous assumption of omniscience which would be ludicrous in a simple individual. He should say nothing when he speaks in the plural which would make him look silly if he used the first person singular. Now, this modest requirement involves, I think, a good deal. I will try to say what it involves by an example, of which I frequently think. I remember a young gentleman, who, in my hearing, confessed, in answer to a question from Carlyle, that he did a certain amount of journalistic work. The great man thereupon said, with his usual candour, and, I must add, without any personal discourtesy, that, in his opinion, the journalism of the period was just so much ditch-water. What should be a well of English undefiled poured forth streams little better than a public sewer. The phrase, like some other prophetic utterances, sounded a trifle harsh, but was all the more calculated to set me thinking. My thinking naturally led me to reflect upon Carlyle's own example. I was invited some time afterwards to sign a little testimonial

presented to him upon his eightieth birthday, in imitation of the gift which he had himself forwarded to Goethe. In this it was said, and said, I think, most truly, that Carlyle was himself an example of the heroic life in literature. And why? A good many epigrams have been levelled at Carlyle, and he has more than once been ridiculed as the philosopher who preached the virtues of silence in thirty volumes. Now, Carlyle's utterances about silence may not have been unimpeachable; but I think that, stated in a commonplace way, they substantially come to this: that idle talk, a mere spinning of phrases, is a very demoralising habit, and one great mischief of the present day; but that the serious and careful utterance of real thought and genuine knowledge must be considered rather as a mode of action than of talk, and deserves the cordial welcome of all men. A Goethe affects action as much as a Napoleon. Carlyle did not really mean to draw the line between an active and a literary life; for he knew as well as any man that literature may at once require the most strenuous activity, and be the source of life and vigour in active men; but between frivolity and earnestness, between the mere waste and dissipation of energy and its concentration upon some worthy purpose. Judged by such a standard, Carlyle's words were also deeds. He wrote a good deal, for he lived a long time, and

had for many years to live by his pen. I could, I think, mention several professional authors who habitually provide as much copy in a month as Carlyle ever achieved in a year. But, luckily for them, their works are not collected. Carlyle appears to be voluminous because he never wrote anything which was not worth preservation, and that because he never wrote an essay without making it as good as his abilities permitted. He did so, although he was till middle life hard pressed for money, and helping to support his family out of his narrow earnings. He stuck indomitably to his own ideal of what was best, though he had slowly to form a public which could appreciate him. And through long years of struggle and hardship he never condescended to make easy gains at the price of inferior workmanship, or to lower his standard of excellence in order to meet the immediate demands of editors. In that sense, if in no other, I call Carlyle a worthy hero of literature, and I reverence his example a great deal more, I fear, than I have imitated it.

Perhaps, indeed, a man must have an unusually, even unreasonably, strong conviction of the truth and importance of his mission before he can make such sacrifices in order to discharge it worthily. To most of us the question occurs whether it can possibly be worth while to do so. Perhaps, if I devoted my-

self exclusively to delivering my message to mankind as forcibly as I could, and to making all necessary preparations, it might be rather more effective than the second-hand twaddle which I actually produce. But would the game be worth the candle? I have, it may be, a family to support. Should I not, as an honest man, think first of my butcher and my baker and of paying the collector of rates, before I undertake to become an immortal author? Probably, at the best, my immortality would be a very short one, for there is not one author in a thousand who can make his voice audible at the distance of a generation. Is it not better and wiser to earn an honest living by innocent small talk, than to aim at a great success and let my children go barefoot and lose their schooling? That low man, says Browning's Grammarian—

That low man goes on adding one to one,
His hundred's soon hit:
This high man, aiming at a million,
Misses an unit.

Is it not better to hit your hundred than to aim at your million and miss it? That is a problem which I do not think it possible to answer by a general rule. We rightly honour the Carlyle or the Wordsworth who has forced the public to admire him in spite of critical gibes and long obscurity; but we must not

forget that even success does not necessarily justify the audacity which has won it, and that a good many people who fancied themselves to be capable of enlightening the world have been empty-headed impostors who would have done better to take the critic's advice: drop their pens and mind their gallipots. Devotion to an ideal, like other high qualities, may be misplaced or counterfeited by mere personal vanity. But leaving each man to decide by the concrete circumstances of his own case, I still hold that at least we should try in this respect to act in Carlyle's spirit. I cannot blame the author who, under certain conditions, feels that his first duty is to pay his weekly bills, so long, of course, as he does not earn the money by pandering to the bad passions of his readers; for there are modes of making a livelihood by the pen to which starvation or the workhouse would be preferred by any high-minded man. But we will not judge harshly of the author who lives by supplying innocent, if rather insipid, food for public amusement. He might be capable of better things; but, then, he might certainly be doing much worse. Yet in any case, I say that, to have a tolerably comfortable conscience, an author should try to look a little farther than this. The great mass of mankind has to devote most of its energies to employments which require nothing more

than honest work; and yet even the humblest can do something to maintain and elevate the moral standard of his surroundings. The author, so far as he is simply a journeyman, a reporter of ordinary events and speeches, for example, does his duty so far as he reports them honestly; and we have no more to say to him. But the author who takes part in political and social or religious discussions has a responsibility which involves something more. Probably he feels—I am sure enough that I feel—that his performance makes remarkably little difference to mankind in general; and that he is playing only an infinitesimal part in the great processes by which the huge world blunders along, struggling into some approximation to a more tolerable order. He may compare himself to one of the myriads of insects building up one square yard on the coral reef which stretches for hundreds of leagues. Yet even the coral reef depends on the units, and if the insect's powers are small it concerns him to make the best of them. Now, to make the best of them implies some genuine interest in his work; something that makes the reader perceive that he is being addressed by a human being, not a mere machine for vamping up old materials. I have been struck in reading newspaper articles, even my own, by the curious loss of individuality which a man seems to suffer as a writer.

Unconsciously the author takes the colour of his organ; he adopts not only its sentiment but its style, and seems to become a mere transmitter of messages, with whose substance he has no more to do than the wires of the electric telegraph which carries them. But now and then we suddenly come across something fresh and original; we know by instinct that we are being addressed by another man, and are in a living relation to a separate human being, not to a mere drilled characterless unit of a disciplined army; we find actually thoughts, convictions, arguments, which, though all arguments are old, have evidently struck the writer's mind, and not merely been transmitted into his pen; and then we may know that we are in the presence of a real force, and meeting with a man who is doing his duty. I refrain from mentioning, though I easily could mention, living modern instances. But on looking to the history of the past, it is curious to notice how rare the phenomenon is, and how important it is when it occurs. Think for a moment, for example, of old Cobbett, agricultural labourer and soldier, with nothing to help him but his shrewd mother-wit and his burly English strength. He wrote much that was poor and clumsy enough; much, too, that was pure claptrap, and much that was dictated by personal motives and desire for notoriety. But in spite of this the untaught

peasant became one of the great political forces, more effective than the ninety and nine elegant *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly* reviewers, who had all the advantages which he lacked. Why? Partly, no doubt, because he was a really strong man; but also because he had at least one genuine and deeply-rooted conviction, springing out of his profound desire for the welfare of the class which was both the largest and the most helpless of the England of his day. He is, therefore, one example, and there are many others, of the singular power which is exercised in journalism by a man, under whatever disadvantages, who possesses, or rather who is possessed by, some master-thought, and utters it in season and out of season with perhaps disproportionate intensity, but with perfect sincerity. Now, though Cobbett would be in some respects a bad model, I only refer to him in this sense. When my young friends consult me as to the conditions of successful journalism, my first bit of advice comes to this: know something really; at any rate, try to know something; be the slaves of some genuine idea, or you will be the slaves of a newspaper—a bit of mechanism instead of a man. You can carry on the business with self-respect—whatever your success—if it is also something more than a business; if, for example, you can honestly feel that you are helping on the propa-

ganda of sound principle, denouncing real grievances, and speaking from genuine belief. No man has a right to lay down the law to statesmen as though he were in possession of absolute knowledge, or as though he were a man of science talking to a class of ignorant schoolboys. But every man ought to believe that truth is attainable, and to endeavour with all his power to attain it. He should study the great problems of the day historically: for he must know how they have arisen; what previous attempts have been made to solve them; how far recent suggestions are mere reproductions of exploded fallacies; and so qualify himself to see things in their true relations as facts of a great process of evolution. He should endeavour to be philosophical in spirit, so far, at least, as to seek to base his opinions upon general principles, and to look at the events of the day from a higher point of view than that of personal or party expediency. And he must, though upon this it is hardly necessary to insist, be familiar with the affairs of the day: for no one can apply principles to politics effectively without a genuine first-hand knowledge of the actual currents of political life. Unless a man can take up his calling in some such spirit, he can be but a mere retailer of popular commonplaces, and must live from hand to mouth or upon the chance utterances of people as thoughtless

as himself, increasing the volume of mere noise which threatens to drown sense. But if he seriously cultivates his powers, and enriches his mind, he may feel sure that even in journalism he may be discharging one of the most important functions which a man can undertake. He may be right or wrong in the particular doctrines which he supports. Indeed, the first and most obvious result of any attempt to take wider views of politics is the admission that wisdom (and as certainly, nonsense) is not the exclusive possession of any party in politics, literature, or philosophy. But something is done whenever a man of trained intellect and genuine conviction lifts popular discussion to a higher plane. At such times it rises above the region of personal invective or pure platitude, and involves a conscious reference to great principles and to the remote conditions of the little bit of history which we are actually transacting. When John Stuart Mill became a member of the House of Commons, and was accepted as a philosopher coming among practical men, he said much that displeased his hearers; but it was observed by competent judges at the time, that the tone of parliamentary debates was perceptibly raised. Members of Parliament were forced to reflect for the moment, not only how their speeches would tell in next day's reports, and what traps they were setting for op-

ponents, but also for a brief instant, how their arguments would stand the test of impartial logic. Mill tells a significant story in his autobiography, which, perhaps, indicates one source of his influence. When he appeared upon the hustings he was asked whether he had not said that the English working-classes were generally liars. He replied simply, "I did," and the reply was, he says, received with "vehement applause". The incident, he adds, convinced him that the working-classes valued nothing more than thorough straightforwardness, and honoured a man for daring to tell them of their faults. I hope that it is so: I believe, in point of fact, that no quality is more heartily honoured than unflinching political honesty. And I confess that I have often wondered why it is that where the reward is so clear, so few people take the plain road which leads to it. It seems equally clear that moral courage pays better than any other quality in politics, and that it is the rarest of all qualities even to be simulated. We are all anxious to show how profound is our affection for the masses; but how many candidates for their favour dare to give Mr. Mill's proof of genuine respect? No doubt you must make it clear that you possess some other qualities before you can hope to conciliate the respect of a class by accusing it openly of habitual lying. Indeed, this might be taken as a

test of genuine independence. Till you can tell men of their faults without being suspected of spite or bad temper—till you can praise them without being suspected of unworthy flattery—you are not really in a position worthy to be called independent. How many journalists—I say nothing of statesmen—stand firmly enough on their own legs to speak out without giving offence? We are often told of a great revolution of opinion, and especially of the abandonment of the old prejudice against government interference. That a great change has taken place in the opinions which men profess is undeniable; though how far that change has been due to unbiassed scientific reflection, and how far to a change in the conditions of popularity, is a very different question. I see, for example, a statement by an honourable gentleman that he approves of the Eight Hours Bill because the principle of non-interference with adult labour is obsolete. It is too late to avow it. If the honourable gentleman means to say that experience has proved the principle to be erroneous, he is, of course, justified in abandoning it. But, if his meaning be simply that the principle has gone out of fashion, what is this but to admit that you will abandon any doctrine as soon as it ceases to be popular? Do we really mean to assert that a fallacious doctrine can never get the upper hand;

that the beliefs of to-day are always better than the beliefs of yesterday; that every man who has dared to stick to an opinion condemned by a majority must necessarily be a fool for his pains? That really seems to be a common opinion. We hear a great deal at the present day about "mandates," and a mandate seems to be regarded not simply as a declaration of the will of a majority which must, in point of fact, be obeyed, but as the official utterance of an infallible church which cannot in point of logic be erroneous. Now, I confess that I have always had a weakness for the faithful Abdiel. I believe that a man is often doing invaluable services who resists the dominant current of opinion, who denounces fallacies when they are growing and flourishing, and points out that a revolution in belief, even though it be inevitable for the time, and even though it contain an element of right reason, may yet contain errors and hasty judgments and deviations from the true line of progress, which require exposure the more unsparing in proportion to their temporary popularity. Is not the ordinary journalist's frame of mind singularly unfavourable to his discharge of this function? and is it not inevitable that it should be so as long as the journalist's only aim is to gain a hearing somehow? It matters not which side he takes. He denounces some new doctrine, but only in

the name of the current prejudices which it happens to shock. He advocates it, but only because it is the last new fashion of the day. In either case he falls into the ordinary party vice of imagining that his opponents must be fools or knaves, that their opinions are directly inspired by the devil or a judicial blindness inflicted by Providence, simply because he will not take the trouble to understand them. The man who would try to raise himself above the position of the mere pander to passing antipathies must widen his intellectual horizon. He must qualify himself to take broad views; he must learn that his little list of commonplaces does not represent real thought, but is often the embodiment of mere prejudice, or perhaps the deposit of words left by thinkers of past generations; he must learn to do more than merely dish them up with a new sauce; he must concentrate his abilities upon definite problems, consider how they have arisen, and what is their relation to the past and the future. To do so requires some disinterestedness: some love of truth for its own sake; and a capacity for answering your opponent by explaining him, instead of a mere quickness for taunting him personally. It requires, no doubt, serious and prolonged application. Even such a training will not enable a man to unlock all the puzzles of the day; but it may help towards the

desirable consummation in which a solution is at least sought in connection with established principles, and with a constant reference to the organised experience which also can be a safe guide to more reasonable conclusions. Even the attempt to do so may strengthen a man against the temptation to take short cuts to notoriety, and seek a momentary sensation at the sacrifice of permanent effect. We owe gratitude to all who have acted upon such principles and won the influence which comes at last, though it comes slowly, to honest work, bestowed even upon such shifting materials as political and moral philosophy.

I have dwelt so far chiefly upon political journalism, because it is so characteristic a part of modern literature, and illustrates so clearly some obvious tendencies of the time. I must say something, however, of another department of literature, which is sometimes said to have nothing at all to do with morality. The poet or the novelist, it is suggested, has no duties except that duty which Scheherazade discharged at the risk of her neck,—the duty of keeping her master amused. If, instead of telling him stories about genii, she had read him every morning an orthodox sermon or an ethical discourse, the one thousand and one nights would have been diminished by one thousand. Am I to tell our modern Schehe-

razades to forget the *Arabian Nights*, and adopt for our use passages from the homilies of Tillotson? Some religious persons have taken that horn of the dilemma, and perhaps with some plausibility. When the world is heaving with the throes of a social earthquake, what right have you or I to be lounging on sofas, telling silly stories about young ladies' and gentlemen's billings and cooings? Perhaps the condemnation should be extended to recreations less obviously frivolous. Your philosopher who tries to distinguish or to identify "is" and "is not," and to draw the true line between object and subject, has a very fascinating plaything, but is perhaps as far from influencing the world. Judging from the history of past philosophical cobwebs, he might as well be framing conundrums, or learning how to throw grain through the eye of a needle.

I only refer to this to say that I am not in favour of suppressing either art or philosophy. I have a kind of hankering after them in some forms myself. I assume, without further argument, that Shakespeare, and Milton, and Wordsworth, and Fielding, and Scott, and Dickens, did well in devoting themselves to literature, and probably did more to make the world happier and better than if they had composed sermons or systems of philosophy. I must, as I said, refrain from pronouncing any set eulogy upon

the services rendered by authors. This only I take for granted. No one, I think, of any intellectual capacity can remember the early days when his faculties were ripening, when he wandered, for the pure delight of wandering, in the enchanted world of the great imaginative writers, saw through their eyes, and unconsciously caught the contagion of their sympathies, without feeling a deep gratitude to the men who not only gave him so much innocent pleasure, but who incidentally refined his taste and roused his enthusiasm, and quickened his perception of whatever is beautiful, or heroic, or pathetic, in the moral or the natural world. The highest literature embodies the instincts by which a cultivated people differs from the barbarous, and the classes are in a true sense civilised, which enjoy and appreciate the ennobling as distinguished from the coarser pleasures, and rise above the merely brutal life. One who aspires to be a leader, or to follow the steps of the leaders, in this band of crusaders against barbarism, must surely have some corresponding duties. I am here upon the edge of certain troublesome controversies which I shall refrain from discussing at length. This only I need say. Some great authors explicitly accept the function of preaching. Milton, and, in later days, Wordsworth, identified the offices of the prophet and the poet, and set themselves

deliberately to expound an ideal of life, and justify the ways of God to man. And Milton gave the principle in his famous saying, that he who would write well hereafter of laudable things must be himself a true poem. Yet men equally great have impressed readers by their apparent indifference to such considerations. They accept the new commandment which, as Emerson tells us, the Muse gave to her darling son, "Thou shalt not preach". Shakespeare and Scott did not consciously and deliberately write to set forth any ideal; they even wrote, more or less, to make money; they were magnificent opulent geniuses, who poured out their imaginative wealth liberally and spontaneously, without a thought of any particular moral, simply because their minds were full to overflowing of great thoughts and vivid images, which they diffused as liberally as the rose gives its scent. Are we to say that they were wrong or morally inferior, even if artistically superior, to those who wrote, like Milton or Dante, with a more definite aim? Must I condemn Scott because he did not write, like the excellent Miss Edgeworth, or even like Dickens in some of his stories, to preach consciously that honesty is the best policy, or that selfishness is a vice; and, if so, must I not condemn a man from whom I have not only received an incalculable amount of innocent enjoyment, but

imbibed—it is my own fault if I have not imbibed—many thoughts that have strengthened and stimulated the best elements of my nature? If I insist upon the moral influences, am I not confounding the poet and the preacher, and falling under the lash of I know not how many critical connoisseurs? If I renounce the preachers, I am renouncing some of the greatest artists, and indirectly sanctioning even such art as is worthy only of Holywell Street, and panders to the worst passions.

I will say what I think. Great writers, it seems to me, may be great in two ways; and the greatest is he who combines them most thoroughly. The first-rate writer, in the first place, must—to use a frequently misapplied word—be a thorough realist. He is great in proportion to the width and depth of the truths which he grasps, and to which he gives the most perfect expression. When we read Shakespeare at his best, what strikes us is that he has expressed once for all some home-truth about human nature and the world, round which all inferior writers seem to have been blundering without ever achieving a complete utterance. More generally, every great period of our literature has been marked in one shape or other by a fresh realism, or what is called the desire to return to Nature: to get rid of the phrases which have become conventional and

unreal, and express the real living ultimate truth. Shakespeare and the great men of his time were inspired by such a passion; they were animated by the desire to "hold the mirror up to Nature" and to portray real vivid human passion, for they had burst through the old mediæval chains of theological dogma, and were aroused to a sudden fresh perception of the beauties which had been unrecognised and misconceived by ascetic monks. The men of Pope's time, again, believed in what they, too, called the "religion of Nature," and tried to hasten the day when enlightened reason should finally crush what Berkeley called the "pedantry of courts and schools". Wordsworth and his followers inaugurated a new era by proposing a return to "Nature," because the language, which with Pope expressed a real meaning, had again become the conventional language of a narrow class of critics and the town. It is in all ages one great function of the imaginative writers to get rid of mere survivals; to forego the spectacles used by their ancestors as helps, which have now become encumbrances; to destroy the formulas employed only to save the trouble of thinking, and make us see facts directly, instead of being befooled by words. In that sense it is their great service that they break up the old frost of dreary commonplace, and give life and power, in

place of an acceptance of mere ossified or fossilised remnants of what once was thought. Briefly, they teach us to see what is before us. So far the function of the poet resembles that of the scientific and philosophic observer. He differs radically in method, because he proceeds by intuition instead of analysis; shows us the type, instead of cataloguing the attributes of a class; and gives us a real living man—a Falstaff or a Hamlet—instead of propounding a psychological theory as to the relations of the will, the intellect, and the emotions.

I take it, therefore, that realism in this sense is one essential characteristic of great imaginative power. I hold it to be more than ever necessary; more necessary because scientific methods of thought are more developed. It is less possible for a serious writer to make use of the merely fanciful symbols which were perfectly legitimate as long as they represented real beliefs, but are now fitter for only the lighter moods. The greatest writers have to dispense with fairies and fighting gods and goddesses, and the muses, and to show us a direct portraiture of the forces by which society is actually moved. But the functions of the great writer, though they involve a perception of truth, are not adequately defined by the simple condition of truthfulness. He has to be—may I say it?—a preacher; he cannot help

it; and, so far as he cannot help it, his preaching will be elevating in proportion as it is truthful. He does not preach in the sense in which a moralist preaches, by arguing in favour of this or that doctrine, or expounding the consequences of opinions. It is not his business to prove, but to see, and to make you see. But, in another sense, he cannot help preaching, because his power over you is founded upon sympathy, upon his personal charms, upon the clearness with which he sees and the vividness with which he portrays the real nature of the instincts which make men lovable or hateful. What are really the most fascinating books in the language? I was impressed the other day by discovering that perhaps the most popular of all English books, judging by the number of editions, is Goldsmith's *Vicar of Wakefield*. To what does it owe its popularity? Obviously to the exquisite keenness of Goldsmith's perception of the moral beauty of a simple character, which is always saved from the charge of being unctuous or sentimental by the constant play of gentle and yet penetrative humour. Do we not love Charles Lamb for a similar reason? Why, again, do we love Scott, as all men ought to love him? Is it not because his Jeanie Deans and his Dandie Dinmont, and a hundred more characters, show the geniality, the manliness as well as the

shrewd common-sense of their creator, and his vivid perception of the elements which ennoble the national character which he loved so well? Why does the British public love Dickens so well? For his incomparable fun, no doubt; but also because the fun is always associated with a keen perception of certain moral qualities which they regard with, it may be, excessive admiration. But to give no more examples, I am content to say that the enduring power of every great writer depends not merely on his intellectual forces, but upon the charm of his character—the clear recognition of what it really is that makes life beautiful and desirable, and of what are the baser elements that fight against the elevating forces. We are under intellectual obligations to the man of science who will tell us, for example, how mountain chains have been raised and carved into their present shape. But we are grateful to the great poets and prose writers, to Wordsworth and Mr. Ruskin, for interpreting and stimulating the emotions which make the vision of the great peaks a source of pure delight. We may, in the same way, thank the psychologist who can make more intelligible the principle of association of ideas, or trace the development of the moral sense or the social affections. But we love the man who, like Goldsmith, and Lamb, and Scott, and Wordsworth, has revealed to us by

actual portraits of typical characters, the sweetness and tenderness and truthfulness which may be embodied in humble characters. Love, says Wordsworth, of his shepherd lord—

Love had he found in huts where poor men lie,
His daily teachers had been woods and rills;
The silence that is in the starry sky,
The sleep that is among the comely hills.

The power of discovering and of making us discover such thoughts in the huts of poor men and in natural scenery is the true prerogative of the poet, and it is to that power that he owes his enduring place in our hearts.

I have said this much because I think that it is in a perversion of these principles that we shall find some of the temptations to which the author is in these days most liable. I can only glance at them briefly. One perversion, for example, is indicated by the common use of the phrase "realism". This word has various meanings; but the commonest, perhaps, would not be misrepresented by saying that it involves a confusion between the functions of the man of science and the poet. In a scientific sense, it is a sufficient reason for setting forth any theory that you believe it to be true. The facts which you describe may be hideous and revolting: it is not the less desirable that they should be accurately known. The

poet and novelist may be equally justified in taking hideous and revolting facts into account. That, for example, is the duty of a satirist; and I am not at all concerned to say that satire is illegitimate—I think it perfectly legitimate. I should be the last to assert that a writer should confine himself to such facts as can be discussed with decency in presence of a young ladies' school. On the contrary, I think that, if not the most enviable privilege, it is sometimes a duty of the novelist to set forth vice and crime, and even, it may be, to set them forth in impressive and startling shapes. It is his duty to represent them truly and to make them intelligible; to show how they may be natural, and not to misrepresent even a villain. All I say is, that he should also recognise the fact that they are hideous and revolting. And, therefore, this is no excuse for the man who really dwells upon such facts, not because they are facts, but because he knows that such descriptions are the easiest way of attracting morbid tastes; and that he can get a readier market by being irreverent and indecent than by other expedients. To defend such work on the excuse of realism is simply to indulge in a bit of contemptible humbug, too transparent to need exposure. The purpose of an artist, you say, is to give pleasure, not to preach. That is perfectly true; but to give pleasure to whom?

If it is to give pleasure to the prurient, to the cynical, to the debauchee, to give the kind of pleasure which, to a pure-minded man, is pain, and of which even the blackguard is ashamed, then I will not quarrel over words, and ask whether it can be truly artistic, but I will simply reply that I should have a greater respect for a man who lived by picking pockets. But, you reply, it requires a great deal of skill. So does picking pockets, and so do some other kinds of human energy which I need not particularise. If the ethical judgment be really irrelevant æsthetically, the æsthetic judgment must be irrelevant ethically. If that doctrine be true, we are, therefore, quite at liberty to say that a thing may be beautiful and at the same time blackguardly and beastly. I will, however, express my own conviction, that what is disgusting to a right-minded man cannot be really beautiful, and that the sentiments which it offends cannot be put out of court simply because they are called moral. They have as good a right to be considered as any others.

There is a temptation of the opposite kind: the temptation to what I may briefly call sentimentalism. The virtue of idealism is as necessary as the virtue of realism; and every great writer shows his greatness by combining the two. The contradictory of the real is not properly the ideal, but the unreal—

which is a very different thing. For idealism means properly, as I take it, that quality in virtue of which a poem or a fiction does not represent merely the scientific or photographic reproduction of matters of fact, but incarnates an idea and expresses a sentiment. A great work imparts to us the impression made upon a mind of unusual power, reflectiveness, and emotional sensibility by some aspect of the world in which we all live, but which he can see more vividly than others. To be really impressive, therefore, it must correspond to facts and be the genuine product of experience. The erroneous idealism is that which perverts the truth in order to gain apparent emphasis; which deals in the impossible, the absurd, and the exaggerated; and supposes a world which cannot even be better than the actual, because it cannot exist; which, therefore, has the defect of being arbitrary and inconceivable. So political utopias are interesting in proportion as they suggest a legitimate construction, based upon actual facts and observed laws of human nature. As soon as we see that they presuppose a world of monstrosities, of impossible combinations of incompatible qualities, they become mere playthings. And the same is true of every work of imagination; as soon as it ceases to have a foundation in truth—to be other than realistic—it loses its real hold upon our sympathies. You solve

no problem when you call in a god to cut the knot. This is the tendency of the sentimentalist, who refuses to be bound by the actual conditions. His creations are ephemeral because only plausible, even to the imagination, so long as the illusions to which they are congenial survive. And he probably falls into the further error that the emotion which he utters becomes as factitious as the laws which he invents. The man who weeps because he is melted at the sight of misery, touches us; but when he weeps because he finds it pleasant, or because he wishes to make a public exhibition of his tenderness of heart, we find him out by degrees and call him a humbug and a sentimentalist. Sham feelings and moral facts are the staple of the sentimentalist and the cause of his inevitable decay.

These remarks may serve to suggest the temptations which most beset the author in our days, though peculiar to our day only in the degree in which authorship has become more professional. For the ideal author is the man who, having discovered truth, desires to reveal it to his fellows, or, being full of perceptions of beauty, cannot resist the impulse to embody them in words or outward symbols. But when he desires also to live by his powers, he is at once in a position of which all authors know the peril. He becomes self-conscious; for he has a per-

petual poultice of public favour or enmity applied to soften his fibres, and to make him feel, even in his study, that an eye is upon him and that he must so act as always to preserve attention. He is tempted to produce sensation at any cost—to shock and startle by horrors if he cannot move the sympathies by gentle arts: for a man who cannot command the pathetic, can, at least, always be disgusting. He can turn our stomachs if he cannot move our hearts. He is tempted, at least, to caricature—to show how keen is his perception by crude and glaring colours, and to indulge in the grotesque as an easy substitute for the really graphic; he can affect a facile cynicism to show how profound is his penetration, and display that marvellous knowledge of the world and the human heart, and that power of discovering the emptiness of all apparent virtues which is so common an endowment of young gentlemen upon their first initiation into real experience of life. There is nothing which the author affects so easily at his first start as the world weariness which comes from long experience and years of disappointed hope. And when a man has once gained applause for his sentiment, he finds himself his own covert rival, and is forced to substitute for the first “sprightly runnings” a fanciful pumping up of the last dregs of his old feelings. Nothing, unfortunately, is more common,

or could be more easily illustrated by examples of good writers, than the spectacle of the veteran trying to reproduce in cold blood the effects which he struck out spontaneously and unconsciously in youth. And, then, at every instant the poor author feels that he must keep up with the fashion; he lives in fear of that verdict which will come some day, that he is an old fogey, and that he is transgressing those eternal principles which were discovered by some ingenuous youth a fortnight ago.

Some such danger is, indeed, shared by others than the author. It is the misfortune of his calling that success with him is intrinsically associated with notoriety. A man may do good work in many departments of life, of which no one will ever hear beyond a narrow circle. I hold, for my part, that the greatest part of the good work which is done in the world is actually of that kind, and that the best is done for the pure love of work. The world knows nothing of its greatest men, and as little, perhaps, of its best. But what would be the good of writing even a *Hamlet* or a *Divine Comedy* if nobody was to read it? Some great writers, I know, have prided themselves on finding fit audience and few; and I fully agree that a man who could really influence a few seminal minds might be well content with such a result of his labours. But, after all, the genuine aim of a

great author must be, directly or indirectly, to affect the world in which he lives, whether by changing its beliefs or stimulating its emotions. And, as a rule, he cannot do so without becoming known, and even known to vast numbers of readers. Some religious writers, the author, for example, of the *Imitation of Christ*, have influenced many generations, while absolutely concealing their identity. Even they must, at least, have desired that their works should be known; and the case is a rare one. For the author generally, success of the worthiest kind, success in enlightening, encouraging, and stimulating his fellow-men, is inextricably connected with success of a lower kind, the success measured by fame and popularity. That, of course, is equally the case with statesmanship: a statesman has to appeal to crowds, and is too apt to be fascinated by thunders of applause; public oratory, even in the pulpit, is a terrible stimulant to unworthy vanity. The author only differs in this, that his very function presupposes a temperament of more than average sensibility; that he does not get that case-hardening which is administered to the statesman by the opposition orator; and that publicity has a specially intoxicating effect upon the man whose proper home is in his study, and who, perhaps, leaves it only to mix with a circle of reverent admirers.

I have tried to indicate some of the obvious temptations of authors, especially so far as they are strengthened by the practice of authorship as a profession. They may be summed up by saying that they tend to degrade the profession into a trade, and a trade which has as many tricks as the least elevating kind of business. It would be, perhaps, desirable to end by deducing some definite moral. But, in the first place, I think that any such moral as I could give is sufficiently indicated by the statement of the dangers. And, in the second place, I do not think that there is any moral that can be regarded as peculiar to authors. For an author, after all, is a man, and, as all men ought to be, a workman. His power comes to this, that he is a man with a special capacity for exciting sympathy. That he should be a good workman, therefore, goes without saying; and it follows that he should have a sense of responsibility in whatever department he undertakes; that he should not bestow his advice upon us without qualifying himself to be a competent adviser; nor write philosophical speculation without serious study of philosophy; nor, if possible, produce poetry or even fiction without filling his mind by observation or training it by sympathy with the great movements of thought which are shaping the world in which we live. It is a sort of paradox which cannot be

avoided, that we must warn a man that one condition of all good work is that it should be spontaneous, and yet tell him that it should be directed to make men better and happier. It seems to be saying that the conscious pursuit of a given end would be inconsistent with the attainment of the end. Yet I believe that this is a paradox which can be achieved in practice on the simple condition of a reasonable modesty. The author, that is, should not listen to those who would exaggerate the importance of his work. The world can get on very well without it; and even the greatest men are far more the product than the producers of the intellectual surroundings. The acceptance of that truth—I hold it to be a truth—will help to keep in check the exaggerated estimate of the importance of making a noise in the world, which is our besetting sin, and help to make a regulating principle of what is a theoretical belief, that a man who is doing honestly good work in any department, whether under the eyes of a multitude or of a few, will be happiest if he can learn to take pleasure in doing it thoroughly rather than in advertising it widely. And, finally, with that conviction we shall be less liable to the common error of an author who grumbles at his want of success, and becomes morbid and irritable and inclined to lower his standard, when in reality he ought to remember

that he is as unreasonable as a marksman who should complain of the target for keeping out of the line of fire. "It is my own fault" is often a bitter reflection, but a bitter may be a very wholesome tonic.

THE VANITY OF PHILOSOPHISING.

WHEN the Preacher exclaimed, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," he did not exclude his own wisdom "I communed with my own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all that have gone before me in Jerusalem: yea, my heart hath great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I gave my heart to know wisdom and to know madness and folly: I perceived that this also is vexation of spirit. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow." The Preacher, whoever he may have been, has uttered thoughts upon which many eloquent followers have expatiated. More than two thousand years have passed since the words were written; philosophies have risen and spread and decayed; and yet, in this year 1895, can we say that they have brought more than a multiplication of doubt? Has the increase of knowledge as yet diminished sorrow, or established any firm standing ground from which we may look upon the universe and say that the eternal riddle is, I will not say solved, but brought a

step nearer to solution? A great poet—I can't tell whether he lived in the twelfth or the nineteenth century, for the phrase is equally characteristic of either Omar Khayyām or Edward Fitzgerald—gives the same thought :—

Myself, when young, did eagerly frequent
Doctor and saint, and heard great argument
About it and about: but evermore
Came out by the same door as in I went.

What, indeed, are eight or twenty centuries in the life even of this planet? There are moments at which we all have suddenly felt by flashes the sensation of being suspended in vast abysses of space and time: when we see, for example, a chart of the heavens which has been recently revealed to us by astronomers, and find that spaces between the stars shown to us by ordinary eyesight are filled in every direction with world beyond world, vast systems of worlds, worlds in every stage of evolution, growing out of nebulous vapour or sinking into eternal coldness: while the imagination is staggered and bewildered by the inconceivable vastness of the spaces indicated, and its own infinitesimal pettiness. If we stroll into a museum and look at the petrified bones of some grotesque monster, and after rejoicing, perhaps, that there is an end of him, we are struck by the thought of the vast lapse of ages during which

he was being slowly hammered out of some mere primitive form, and then slowly decayed, and was gradually elbowed out of existence by monsters a degree less preposterous than himself, and gain a new measure of the portentous lapse of time. The greatest of poets has summed up the impression in the phrase which Carlyle was fond of quoting: "we are such stuff as dreams are made of": and our little speck of existence a vanishing quantity in comparison of the infinite above and below and around us, which we dimly infer though we cannot distinctly realise it. If in such a mood, common at times to all who can think or feel, we take up some philosophical work, and find the writer complacently setting forth a cosmogony or a theory of the Universe; explaining how things came into being; what is the reason why they are not better or worse; what is the end of the whole drama: are we not justified in exclaiming with Carlyle :—

The builder of this Universe was wise,
He planned all souls, all systems, planets, particles:
The plan he shaped all worlds and æons by
Was—Heavens!—was thy small nine-and-thirty articles!

Carlyle has been, to some of us, the most stimulating of writers, just because he succeeded in expressing, with unsurpassed power, the emotion which I must be content with indicating—the emotion which is

roused by sudden revelations of the infinitudes, the silences and eternities that surround us. We cannot keep it permanently before us; the present absorbs us, and its little interests seem to be all that is important. It is only at moments when, for example, we reflect that our action of a minute ago is already a part of the mysterious past, sinking downwards, and rapidly becoming invisible in the depths of the infinite ocean, that we are startled by a momentary pang, and feel as though to live with a constant sense of our insignificance would be to risk the paralysis of all our powers of thought and action. That way, we are inclined to say, lies madness. We shall lose our heads if we gaze too long into such tremendous depths. Possibly we may restore our equilibrium by meditating upon the infinitesimal, though possibly too we may rather feel that such meditations only reveal another infinite. I intended to make a few reflections suggested by such thoughts, when I found a guide, and, to a great extent, an ally, in a writer who has lately taken up the ancient parable. Mr. Balfour, in a book rather quaintly entitled *Foundations of Belief*, has dwelt upon the vanity of all known philosophy, and has shown, or appears to some of his readers to have endeavoured to show, that it is hopeless to lay any sound foundations on the little film of knowledge beneath which lie the great un-

known abysses. He tries to indicate some other basis, though, so far as I can understand him, the foundations of his edifice are ingeniously supported by the superstructure; and that is a kind of architecture which, to my mind, lacks stability. Through a large part of his argument, however, I find myself in the pleasanter position of an ally. He asserts, and I doubt whether any competent thinker would materially differ from him, that there does not, as a matter of fact, exist any established system of philosophic truth—any system upon which we can rely, as we do, in fact, rightly or wrongly rely, upon certain scientific doctrines. We no more doubt the truth of the Newtonian system of astronomy than we doubt that fire burns or that bread nourishes. But the briefest glance at the old systems of philosophy shows us, as Mr. Balfour says, nothing but imperishable ruins—imperishable æsthetically—but, logically, mere crumbling fragments. We can still read Plato with delight; but the delight is due to the beauty of style and exposition, not, certainly, to the conviction produced by his reasoning. Aristotle's philosophy is a marvel—for his time: but his theory of the Universe is no more tenable than his Natural Science. The luxuriant growths of later Greek philosophy are interesting only to the curious investigators of the pathology of the human intellect. The vast de-

velopment of scholastic philosophy in the middle ages showed only how far unlimited ingenuity and subtlety may lead in the wrong direction, if it starts with mistaken principles. It ended by upsetting the doctrines which it attempted to prove, and had finally to commit suicide, or fall before the insurrection of living thought. The great men who revolted against its tyranny in its later stages constructed new systems, which, to them, seemed demonstrable, but which, to us, are already untenable. We cannot accept Descartes, or Spinoza, or Leibnitz, or Bacon, or Hobbes, or Locke, as giving satisfactory or even coherent systems, or as having done more than lead to the thorough scepticism of Hume. If Kant presented one solution of the difficulties in which philosophy was landed, we have still to ask what precisely Kant meant; whether his criticism was simply all-destructive, or really left anything standing, and, if so, what it left standing; and who represents the proper line of development. Shall we, with Schopenhauer, pronounce Hegel to be a thorough impostor? and, if so, can we seriously accept Schopenhauer's own system? If, here and there, some people accept his theories for literary purposes, nobody will maintain that they rest upon any permanently settled foundation. If, again, we believe in Hegel, we have to make out what we mean by believing in Hegel, and

to which school of his followers we are to attach ourselves. I need not consider the polemic which Mr. Balfour has directed against the writers who have given a version of Hegelian principles in England. Personally, I agree with his criticisms in a general way; but I fancy that even the adherents of those principles would defend themselves mainly by declaring that they do not make such pretensions as he ascribes to them. They try, at most, to indicate a way of approaching, not of solving the problems. But, at least, they would claim to have done one thing: namely, to have proved the inadequacy of the rival system of empirical philosophy, accepted by the English followers of Locke, and now mainly represented for us by Mr. Herbert Spencer. I only add to this, that it is not a question of the convictions of any individual thinker, however eminent. Philosophies of every different variety have been not merely accepted by those who first devised them, but have been taken up in good faith by whole schools of disciples; they have been tested, on a large scale, by systematic application to all relevant questions, and one after the other has become bankrupt; has lost its hold on the world, and confessed that it leaves the riddle as dark as it was before. All that can be claimed for the greatest philosophers is, that they have, at least, proved that certain paths which seemed to lead

through the labyrinth, end in a deadlock; that they have exposed certain fallacies by the process of provisionally believing in them; and that they have buoyed certain shoals, and demonstrated that no channel leads in what seemed to be a promising direction. Is there any channel open?

Once more, I might follow—I might even, if I had time, expand Mr. Balfour's argument in another direction. He has pointed out—not for the first time certainly—how men's beliefs are due not to reasoning, but to countless causes which prevent them from reasoning. The argument is too familiar, indeed, to require much emphasis. Some one, arguing in the days of the old orthodoxy upon the necessity of the true faith to salvation, put the case of a couple of infants deserted by their parents. One of them is carried off by a Mohammedan and the other by a Christian. Each will, of course, adopt the faith of the party into whose hands it has fallen; and the problem was, whether the infant seized by the Mohammedan would be eternally damned, and the one taken by the Christian go straight to heaven; and whether, on the whole, that would satisfy our sense of justice. The argument implies the inevitableness of error. Men not only do, but ought to hold, contradictory opinions. Take a Scottish Davie Deans, brought up in the shadow of John Knox's

pulpit; a Tyrolese peasant, educated in the Catholic Church; and a Mohammedan, living at Mecca; and, of course, it is plain, not only that each will accept the creed which pervades what is for him the whole world known to him, but that as a reasoning being each is probably in the right. That is to say, the accessible evidence is in each case overwhelmingly in favour of the doctrine, inasmuch as the supposed reasoner is entirely unaware of the evidence which might be produced on the other side. But what is true of the peasant is true of the philosopher. Measured on a sufficient scale, the difference vanishes. This intellectual horizon is just as much limited, though not so narrowly limited. No one but a bigot would deny that a mediæval philosopher might accept on perfectly reasonable grounds the dogmas of the Catholic Church. The historical difficulties had not even been presented to his mind. He had no reason for doubting innumerable assumptions as to fact which have since turned out to be erroneous; and if the method of his reasoning was itself fundamentally vicious, the fact only came to light gradually in the process of working out the results. We—including in the "we" the philosophers—have to approach truth by the help of assumptions, and by trying how in point of fact they will work; it is so hard to remember that they are only assumptions

that we generally call them self-evident truths. Considering how many assumptions are involved even in the very structure of language itself; how we are led into all kinds of difficulties by the essential instrument of thought, which has been fashioned by the unconscious logic of our ancestors; it is not strange that the best that can be said of philosophies is, that they represent convenient working hypotheses. That, at least, seems to be a liberal view of their logical value. In another sense they are really to be considered as poetry, rather than as logic. They are modes of presenting certain conceptions of the world by apparently logical formulæ, instead of by concrete imagery; but, substantially, they represent the emotions with which men regard their dwelling place, and are radically imperfect if we insist upon considering them as providing us with correct plans and drawings of its various arrangements.

Let us look for a moment at another set of reflections upon which Mr. Balfour touches. What has been the influence of these systems upon men's lives? Have these provisional constructions, these fluctuating, conflicting, unstable combinations of pretentious formulæ, really decided or directed the course of human history? It would seem so, if you read certain histories of philosophy. They seem to suggest that the hinge upon which all the course of

human affairs ultimately turns is the growth of certain metaphysical conceptions. There is a preliminary difficulty in seeing how such pretensions can be established. The philosopher in his study or his lecture room discusses problems in which the enormously preponderating majority of the race has so little interest, that it is not even aware that there are any such problems to be discussed. He lays down dogmas so vague and unsatisfactory that half his hearers give up the attempt to understand, or understand them in a sense which the more intelligent half would utterly repudiate; and that intelligent half is itself divided into different schools, interpreting the dogmas in radically contradictory ways. Is it not hard to believe that speculation leads to vast results, when for ninety-nine men out of a hundred it is practically non-existent, and with the small minority it amounts to providing new weapons for endless controversy? We must, of course, admit that men's conduct is in some sense determined by their thoughts. Change the radical beliefs, and you will certainly change the whole constitution of society. And, again, it is obvious that in one sphere of thought the progress of inquiry is of vast importance. Nobody can deny that scientific and mechanical discoveries have, for good or evil, materially affected our lives. The great inventions

of modern times, from gunpowder and printing to the steam-engine and electricity, have changed things as much as if they had altered the physical constitution of the world. They have indeed altered it for us, for they have given us the means of applying forces previously dormant, and therefore for practical purposes non-existent. Such beliefs have an immediate bearing upon the practices of ordinary human beings. But if we are to set down all philosophies as at once untenable and as absolutely unknown to the enormous majority of mankind, it becomes difficult to understand by what process they come to influence, or apparently to influence, the position of the race. A philosopher frames his scheme of the universe to his own satisfaction; but you and I hear nothing about it, and do not trouble ourselves to understand it, and go on working with our good old common-sense conceptions of things, leaving it to the philosopher to construct or destroy the fanciful system which he somehow supposes to lie beneath them. One answer is of course obvious. Religious and ethical systems, it is said, presuppose a philosophy: no one denies that men are profoundly affected by the gods whom they worship and the rules of conduct which they adopt; and therefore the sceptic who is burrowing at the base may be ruining the whole superstructure, although his operations are

no more obvious upon the surface than those of some minute parasite. Accordingly, we are often told that revolutions are ultimately produced by speculation; and that old systems fall with a crash because some shrewd witness has been boring into the foundations upon which they really repose. The French Revolution, according to one familiar statement, was due to the freethinkers who had set about prying into the ultimate grounds of the old faith, and had succeeded in shaking the convictions necessary to social welfare.

That this argument expresses a truth is what I am so far from denying that I should be most anxious to give it emphasis. But what is precisely the truth expressed? Destroy the belief in a church as a social system, and the organisation will crumble. But what is the real cause of the loss of belief? Is it the logical argument that is effective? Does the philosophical revolution underlie the political or religious revolution, or is that to invert cause and effect? Let me take an example to illustrate my meaning. The doctrine of the "rights of man," proclaimed by the whole revolutionary school, was, it is said, the cause of the revolution. The destruction of the old order was caused by the sudden conviction which spread through Europe of the truth of this theory, and the consequent decay of the old authority.

Now we may proceed, if we please, to trace the origin of this doctrine back through certain speculations to the days of the Roman jurists, themselves influenced by the Stoical philosophy. The view suggested is that the doctrine was a kind of germ, a something which preserved its vitality through centuries, like the bacteria of modern physiologists, and which, somehow, developed a baleful or a beneficial activity about a century ago, and changed all the conditions of social equilibrium. But, if this be true, we naturally remark that the potency of the doctrine must have been due, not to the doctrine itself, which lay dormant so long, but to the conditions which suddenly made it effective. The doctrine, indeed, is so obvious, in a sense, that it is not to be doubted that anybody who once began to philosophise about laws and political constitutions, after they had reached a certain stage, would hit upon it in one shape or another. It is not comparable to those scientific discoveries which require patient thought and a dexterous combination of arguments: but one of the primary axioms which present themselves on the very threshold of inquiry. The mediæval peasant who put the question:—

When Adam delved, and Eve span,
Who was then the gentleman?

was, probably, no great philosopher; but he was

giving the essential pith of the doctrine of liberty, fraternity, and equality. It may be regarded as an obvious logical canon, converted by an illegitimate process into a statement of fact. If I make any general statement whatever about men or beasts or stones, I, of course, assume that there is a corresponding class of things in respect of each of which the proposition is equally true. As soon as I say anything, therefore, about morality or politics, which is intended to be true of men in general, I assume, in this sense, that men are so far equal that something may be predicated, indifferently, of every member of the class man. It is very natural and easy to convert this into the proposition that the concrete men of whom I am speaking are, in some sense, actually equal. In doing so, however, I am either making a false statement, or begging the question. As a matter of fact, men are, in many respects, as far as possible from being equal. The real question, therefore, is whether the inequalities which undoubtedly exist are or are not relevant to the political inequalities which I have to consider. As a matter of fact, the inequalities which were challenged by the revolutionary writers were, as I think, and as most of us think, entirely unjustifiable. At any rate, they had, as a matter of fact, produced widespread discontent and bitter antipathies between classes. It

was the existence of these antipathies to which the outbreak was due. The peasant, for example, felt that he was forced to give up the fruit of his labour to the noble, and that the noble was discharging no duty to justify his demands. The peasant, probably, could not read; he was unaware that Rousseau or Voltaire was laying down principles which would cover his case; he had never even heard of philosopher or philosophy; only, when the time was ripe, when the upper orders had become useless, and the lower classes had accumulated a sufficient quantity of passion, of indignant or vindictive feeling, an outraged sense of justice, the crash came, and any formula which would cover the particular case was acceptable. The doctrine then made its fortune; not because it was true, or because it was demonstrable, but because it gave the shortest and simplest expression to the prevailing sentiment. The philosophical dogma, which had been lying idle for generations, doing no particular harm or good, was, suddenly, converted into a war-cry, the more effective because the real vagueness and uncertainty of its application enabled those who used it to save themselves the trouble of thinking or arguing. Instead of substituting particular grievances, and showing that this or that inequality in general was useless and objectionable, they could, in half a dozen

words, denounce all inequality, and be perfectly satisfied with a formula which was imposing for its generality, though true only in its particular application.

I take this familiar case, not only as familiar, but because it seems to me to be typical. Similar general remarks might, I fancy, be made about any of the great religious movements which have, undoubtedly, most profoundly affected human society. They are not due to the philosophers; to the abstract meditations of refined thinkers upon ultimate principles; but to great underlying social changes. Our Christian apologists of the last century held the quaint belief that a new creed was caused by the occurrence of certain miraculous facts, susceptible of legal proof. It is sufficiently obvious to us that this is to invert the process. Given the faith, and there is never any difficulty in supplying the miracles. No quantity of assertions as to miraculous events would have the slightest effect, unless there were a predisposition to accept them. The same answer applies to the theory that a new religion owes its success to the discovery of new moral truths. In the first place, there are, properly speaking, no sudden discoveries in morality; and in the next place, the mere statement of a moral doctrine, and even the presentation of a lofty moral type, can have little importance unless the soil is already

prepared, and the doctrine is but the overt utterance of the sentiments which are seeking for expression. The only explanation that we can give of such events is the social explanation. There are periods, that is in history, when the old order is out of joint; when society has outgrown the institutions which were adequate at a previous stage, and when, therefore, the beliefs associated with them become oppressive, and can no longer pass without challenge; when different races and nations have been brought into collision or combination, and crushed together into new forms by conquest and commerce; when, therefore, the several creeds are no longer supported by the patriotism which has ceased to have a meaning; when a vast amalgam of different faiths and modes of life has been formed out of many heterogeneous elements; and thus a need is created for some wider and more comprehensive system of belief corresponding to the general needs of society. In that case the influence of the philosopher may be of some importance, because he can do something towards suggesting the most workable compromise, and of exposing superstitions which have lost their old support, and the instinctive loyalty of their adherents. Even then his voice will not be predominant. The creed will survive which is most suited to the state of the average intellect; it will include a large element

of the ancient modes of thought, which still insist upon finding some satisfaction, and which, indeed, have a strange vitality beneath the surface, even when explicitly disavowed by the official interpreters of the faith.

Now, if this be accepted as a rough sketch of the actual course of the development of belief, what is the conclusion as to the philosopher's function? Does it go to suggest that philosophy is but a vanity and vexation of spirit, and does it reduce the philosopher to a humbler position than is sometimes claimed for him? My answer would be, in the first place, that the case against philosophy would have to be frankly admitted if the criterion sometimes tacitly suggested be the true one. Nothing could be more hopeless than the claim of any philosophy whatever to have laid down a definitively satisfactory plan of things in general. When Mr. Balfour observes that an Aristotle or Aquinas or Descartes has not laid down a tenable theory of the universe, I can only add that the very phrase—theory of the universe—conveys a sufficient refutation. It is idle, or worse than idle, to imagine that we can lay down, or even hope to lay down, anything of the kind. It needs only one of those glances into the surrounding infinities which I have suggested, or the briefest survey of the history of philosophy, to reveal the sheer impossibility of the

attempt. No one, perhaps, ever quite imagined that his speculation could really lay bare the ultimate ground plan of things in general. But, certainly, philosophers have, at times, thought, or spoken as if they thought, that they could construct a body of first principles which should be to knowledge in general what a science is to some particular application,—the general theory of physics, for example, to astronomy. Philosophy would then be a system of such ultimate principles. The day for such systems has, I think, passed. We have learnt that it is for ever impossible to spin real knowledge out of pure logic. What the universe, or the little bit of it that we know, actually is, can only be learnt by experience; and if experience presupposes categories or forms of intuition, still, without experience, they remain empty; as incapable of producing truth as a mill of grinding flour without corn. Philosophers must admit that on such terms we get only "brain cobwebs"; ingenious feats of intellectual legerdemain, where the operator shows his skill by dexterously hiding away his assumptions, and bringing them out at the end as triumphantly demonstrated conclusions. The more modest ideal, which is now presented to us, is what is called the unification of knowledge. That means, no doubt, that we have to bring our theories into harmony and consistency; to get rid of the

hypothetical and conjectural elements which have intruded themselves from earlier and cruder speculation; and so to analyse the primary factors of thought and the most general conceptions, that we may not have to assume in one relation what we dispute in another. Even this process is, no doubt, exceedingly difficult; it is difficult partly because the human mind has, generally speaking, to begin at the wrong end; to proceed upon postulates which break down here and there and leave inconvenient fragments remaining elsewhere; partly because some philosophers are still open to the charge that they raise a dust and then complain that they cannot see; and, briefly, because, in one way or other, what with the dulness of the ordinary mind and what with the over-subtlety of the acute, our thoughts and beliefs have got into intricate tangles, which will require enormous patience and judgment to wind off and weave into a satisfactory tissue. Genuine philosophers, doubtless, will learn in time how to set about the work. It will probably strike them that instead of evolving pretentious systems of theology, and ethics, and politics, and art, each purporting to give an exhaustive theory of the subject, and each destined to melt away, leaving some infinitesimal residuum of real suggestion, they will have to follow a slower method of gradual and tentative investiga-

tion. If so, we must undoubtedly assign to philosophy a more modest position than has sometimes been claimed for it. It must resign its claim to a vision of transcendental realities, to a knowledge of things in themselves, and of the ultimate groundwork of the universe. It has not, I hold, a subject-matter peculiar to itself; it reveals no principles belonging to a separate sphere of thought; it corresponds simply to the attempt to correct and harmonise the cruder thoughts of the average human being, and to state explicitly in their purity the principles which have been all along implicitly involved in his ordinary observations. It is, therefore, not a substantive, but an adjective; philosophy is not a distinct department of thought, and cannot be defined by itself. All we can say is, that we think philosophically in so far as we think rightly. When our mode of conceiving the world includes no heterogeneous or conflicting element, we shall be philosophers; but we shall not, in that capacity, have a separate dominion of our own.

Now, it will probably do no harm to philosophers more than to other men, to be impressed with a sense of modesty and a right appreciation of the necessary limitations of their enterprise. You have been trying to soar beyond the atmosphere, and you will make the better use of your wings when you

learn that they won't support you in a vacuum. Your failure is not due to the want of aquiline powers of flight, but to the melancholy truth that even an eagle can't do much in an air-pump. Is not that a rather consoling reflection? But here the philosopher begins to be recalcitrant. You are not lowering my pretensions, he says, but attacking the power of man to attain truth upon any terms. All that is given to us in experience is the effect of underlying causes; if the causes vary the effects would vary; and, unless, therefore, you can get back to the cause, your knowledge must remain empirical and radically uncertain. Destroy all transcendental truths, and the phenomenal world itself becomes a mere shifting phantasmagoria, on which we can trace only coincidences and sequences, but are entirely unable to say that they will ever recur again. The argument, of course, raises the recollection of library upon library of controversy. I can only touch one point. Practically, we do not trouble ourselves about this difficulty. We are quite convinced that we know a great many things: we are sure that the sun will rise and set to-morrow; we have no doubt as to the properties of the ordinary objects, of trees and stones and steam-engines; every action of our lives implies a certain confidence in what is called the uniformity of nature; and it is plain enough that even if our knowledge be,

in some sense, only a knowledge of probabilities, yet, from its effect upon conduct, it may be exactly the same as a knowledge of certainties. There may be an indefinite distance between the "necessary truth" that two and two make four and the empirical truth that a stone will fall; but if all the evidence attainable goes to prove that the stone will fall, I should be as foolish not to act upon that hypothesis as not to assume the truth of the arithmetical formula. Now, it is, of course, the growth within recent generations of vast systems of such truths which has alarmed the philosopher. He contrasts his own fluctuating and conflicting dogmas with the steady growth and assured results and mutual confirmation of the established physical sciences. He fears that they will obtain a prestige which will enable them to crush him and sweep his pretended knowledge into the limbo of alchemy and astrology and scholastic logomachy. Here comes in the argument which is really the keystone of Mr. Balfour's whole theory; and, as I cannot accept it, I must dwell upon its true nature. It looks, at first sight, like a retort upon the men of science. Your knowledge, he seems to say, is as vain as your antagonist's. Your physics, and astronomy, and chemistry, and physiology are mere empty shows, like the metaphysical theories that have gone to their long home in histories of philo-

sophy. But to say this would be to accept complete scepticism, and a kind of scepticism which Mr. Balfour would, I am sure, disavow. He believes, of course, just as strongly as any one of us believes, in the astronomical theories of Newton and Laplace; or in the mathematical theories of the great physical sciences. That in which he disbelieves is a kind of bastard science called "naturalism," which, as he tells us, leads to contradictory or incoherent results. The naturalist, it appears, proposes to confine himself to the evidence of the senses, and ends by accepting a view of the world entirely inconsistent with the sensible perceptions. I see a green field: an object which has visual and other properties recognised by my organs of sense. No, says this misguided naturalist, you do not see what you suppose; what really happens is, that there is a vast whirlpool of atoms impinging upon each other and setting up vibrations, the last set of which is communicated to another set of atoms, called my optic nerve. These atoms, by their very nature imperceptible to the senses, are the only realities. We thus start from the senses and we get a world beyond the senses, a world which is a mere dance of infinite multitudes of bits of matter performing all manner of extraordinary gyrations and evolutions. The sensible impressions of colour, sound, and so forth, are mere illusions,

somehow arising in a figment called the mind. This mind is a mere phantom—an unreal spectator of things and events, among which it has no place, and upon which it exercises no influence.

Now, let me say first that I agree with Mr. Balfour that the doctrine thus imputed to the "naturalist" is absurd. I do not believe, for I cannot believe, that I am only a dance of atoms. I "cannot" believe, I say, for the words are to me meaningless. My sensations and emotions are to me the typical realities. I cannot doubt the real existence of pain and pleasure, grief and joy, whatever else I may doubt. I believe, for example, that my toothache is a reality; and nobody will ever persuade me that it is merely a set of molecular changes in my tooth. That it, in some way, is dependent upon such changes I fully believe; but that is quite a different statement. And, secondly, I agree with Mr. Balfour (or with what I take to be Mr. Balfour's belief) that the scientific doctrines which are reached by help of these atoms are established truths. I believe those doctrines, not because I am convinced by the arguments, which I may not have examined or be capable of examining; nor simply because I trust, though I do trust, in the ability and the candour of the scientific reasoners; but because the doctrines can be and have been independently verified. I believe, that is,

in modern astronomy because it has enabled modern astronomers to predict eclipses, and enabled Adams and Leverrier to discover Neptune. That is the conclusive proof; for it is impossible to suppose that the power of prediction should be a result of erroneous belief, and such proofs are verifiable by anybody who can observe the phenomena.

Here, then, we have the difficulty, the difficulty upon which the whole of Mr. Balfour's argument depends. Solve it, and the whole sceptical argument crumbles. The naturalistic theory, we both say, is incredible. The scientific doctrines based upon it are, as we both admit, unassailable. How is this? I reply, first, because the atoms represent nothing more than a logical scaffolding which enables us to infer one set of sensible phenomena from another. We start from phenomena and we end with phenomena. When we have discovered the so-called "law"—the connecting formula—we can remove the hypothesis as the engineer can remove the provisional supports when he has once got the keystone into his arch. That this is so appears, I think, from the whole scientific procedure. How is the atomic theory obtained? Not by any direct observation of atoms themselves. They are, as Mr. Balfour says, not only not objects of observation, but incapable by their nature of ever being directly observed. The

man of science begins by saying, *if* the phenomena of light correspond in some way to a vibration of atoms, the atoms must vibrate in such and such ways. He finds, again, that the laws so discovered will give the law of other phenomena of light; and he argues quite correctly that his hypothesis is for his purpose verified. That is, it has enabled him to discover a verifiable and verified formula. In order to do this he has assumed from the very first the theory which of course appears in his conclusions. All physical science consists ultimately in giving definite formulæ in terms of space and time. It is therefore assumed that the atoms are to have no qualities except those which are definable in terms of space. We exclude any other quality because our whole purpose is to obtain purely geometrical measurements. We have asked how those atoms, infinitesimal bits, so to speak, of solid space, arranged in certain positions, must move in order to correspond to the law given by observation, and we have therefore, of course, predetermined that our answer must come out in terms of atoms.

But, now, what is the error of the "naturalist"? Simply that he has converted the scientific doctrine into an ontological doctrine. He really knows nothing, and cannot possibly know anything, about his atoms, except just this, that they give the law of

the phenomena. He has nothing whatever to say to them in any other relation. If he proceeds, as Mr. Balfour says that he proceeds, to declare that nothing exists except atoms, that they are the ultimate realities, that they are "things in themselves," or objects independent of any subject, he is going beyond his tether, passing from science to transcendental metaphysics, and getting into hopeless confusion. In fact, after he has done his worst we may still follow Berkeley and deny the existence of matter, or declare with Clifford that atoms are only bits of mindstuff, or adopt any other metaphysical theory we please. The atoms at most are things which we judge from the analogy of the senses; and it is a pure illusion to suppose that they can ever take us into an extra-sensible world. They represent not only a convenient but an indispensable contrivance for enabling us to formulate scientific laws, such as those of light and heat; but they take us no further.

In a remarkable passage, Mr. Balfour sketches an analogy, which gives the application of this to philosophical or theological questions; and I will venture to give my own interpretation of the argument because it seems to lead to the real point. We believe, he says, in a scientific theory of heat, although our view of the "realities" has changed. People once thought that

heat was a substance. They now hold it to be a mode of motion. Yet our "scientific faith" (our faith, I suppose, that things are hot, and that their heat varies according to certain assigned laws) remains unaffected. On the other hand, he says, if we cease to believe in the Christian doctrine of the atonement, we cease also to have that "sense of reconciliation" between God and man which the doctrine was intended to explain. This he seems to regard as a kind of melancholy paradox. Why is the scepticism harmless in science and fatal in theology? First, what are the admitted facts? A man of science propounds a theory of heat. If his theory does not give us the observed laws, we reject it and adopt a more successful theory. In any case, we, of course, continue to believe in heat. We may know facts without knowing their causes; as, for example, the fact of gravitation, which is not the less certain because it is at present an ultimate fact. Otherwise our knowledge would be limited indeed; for even if the cause (in the scientific sense) were given, we should still have to ask, what is the cause of that cause? If heat is due to certain systems of atoms, we might still inquire how the atoms came to occupy their places, and possess the properties which they actually have. An effect "depends upon" a cause, as we naturally say; but it does not follow that the

knowledge of the effect depends upon the knowledge of the cause. Now, what are the facts which correspond to the facts of heat in the theory of the atonement? If we believe in a certain being, an anthropomorphic deity, who will punish us or reward us, it is, of course, obvious that if we cease to believe in him we shall cease to desire to be reconciled to him. So if I believed that the warmth of my house depended upon a fire next door, and then discovered that no such fire existed, I should of course cease to care about lighting it. In this there is nothing which wants explanation. I suppose, therefore, that what Mr. Balfour means is, that if men have certain emotions,—remorse, for example, or what is called a conviction of sin,—and then learn to reject the theory by which these emotions were explained, they cease also to feel the emotions. In fact, he emphatically accepts the view that, if we cease to accept theology, we shall cease to be moral. The perversity of a few wretched "naturalists" in continuing to be moral is explained as a case of survival; the moral naturalist is the parasite who draws his sustenance from the organism which he infests. Let us consider the scientific analogy. I believe in heat, and I accept a scientific theory just as far as it gives me verified laws of heat. I believe, too, in the existence of conscience; that is,

I believe that people have real emotions, such as remorse and shame, which correspond to the name. I hold that to be a fact of experience. It would have to be explained, again, so far as explanation is possible, by psychology in the first instance, as heat must be explained by scientific theories. Remorse is a fact, as heat is a fact; and an explanation would consist in giving accurately its place in the moral organism and the laws of its operation. The explanation furnished by any given psychology, by "association," for example, must be accepted or rejected in so far as it explains or fails to explain the facts. If some theory about spiritual "monads" enabled us to show what the conscience is, and how it is, in fact, stimulated or suppressed, we should accept it in the same way as we accept the physical theory of heat. As yet, I need hardly say, no such result has been achieved; and psychology is still far too vague to offer any definite laws of the emotional nature. But in any case, how can a theory about facts make the facts themselves vanish? Would not grief be real just as pain would be real if we could clearly explain how and why it occurred? Why should the "sense of reconciliation" vanish because we show the conditions of its existence? The reason of Mr. Balfour's difficulty, I think, appears from what I have said. In the physical theory we can

draw the line clearly between the scientific and the philosophical spheres. Mr. Balfour can accept the scientific truth, though he does not accept the doctrine which results from translating it into ontology. But the boundary between psychology and philosophy is far less distinct. We constantly confound questions about the constitution of man, as known to us by experience, with questions about supposed intuitions of ultimate truth. The fact that sin causes remorse is interpreted as meaning that remorse actually *is* a knowledge of an avenging deity; and when the emotion is thus identified with the belief, it becomes easy to suppose that to destroy the belief is also to destroy the emotion. I think, indeed, that fallacies of that kind are among the commonest in philosophical writings. Now, of course, psychology has something to say in this matter. It may help, and I think that it has helped us to explain how men come to believe in anthropomorphic deities, and to invest them with the attributes of human rulers. But in that way it tends to show not that the conscience is caused by the belief, but to show how, under certain conditions, it has given rise to a belief by other than logical grounds. It suggests no probability that the conscience will disappear with the fallacy, but only that it will act differently when enlightened by a

different logic. Conscience disappears no more than heat disappears, when both are explained; though the conduct which the emotions or the sensations determine will, of course, be affected.

And now, I can say what I take to be the difficulty, and the escape. Mr. Balfour draws a kind of parallel between the scientific creed, which is, as he would put it, "based upon" a metaphysical doctrine, and the theological creed, which has a similar foundation. If the metaphysical foundation is so uncertain in both cases, must not the scientific be as uncertain as the theological? If we know nothing about atoms, or, on the other hand, about souls, we must be either sceptical in both cases, or credulous in both. There are the same underlying difficulties, and if we manage to overlook them in the case of science, why not overlook them in the case of theology? Conversely, if we elect to be sceptics in theology, how can we escape from scepticism in science? And, as a thorough-going scepticism is, doubtless, an impossible state of mind in practice, the conclusion of many people will be to accept belief in spite of certain gaps in our logical foundations. This, no doubt, is eminently convenient for the "constructive" process adumbrated by Mr. Balfour, which I certainly regard as extra-logical. But is any such dilemma really offered to us? The obvious answer is, that scientific truth,

as Mr. Balfour admits, is not "based upon" metaphysical theory. The astronomical doctrine of a Newton remains equally valid, whatever is the ultimate nature of space or laws or atoms; whether we are materialists or empiricists or idealists. The philosophical "basis" is not really a set of truths which we must know before we can know the astronomical theory; but simply a set of hypotheses which have to conform to the truths given by experience. The unassailable truths are just the facts which we observe, and which science enables us to describe accurately and state systematically. If a metaphysical doctrine has any bearing upon these facts, which seems to be doubtful, it must conform to the facts, and not the facts to it. So long as no such theory is proved, we can afford to remain metaphysically sceptical without losing our hold upon the scientific truth. Now, I should say, what is true of the physical sciences is true of all our knowledge. We may study the moral sciences as we can study the physical sciences. We can observe and colligate the facts of emotion and volition, as we can observe the position of the stars and the laws of heat. Therefore, in so far as theology is an attempt to give a theory of the universe in general, we must accept or deny the doctrines just in so far as they serve to explain or fail to explain the facts.

But, in any case, the facts will remain unaltered, and will not vanish because we may be unable to understand them. But theology corresponds, also, not to the scientific method, but to the ontological inquiries which are represented by Mr. Balfour's "naturalism". Both doctrines, as I should say, lead to incoherence, to contradictions covered by ambiguous language, and to hopeless difficulties, which, in theology, are described as inscrutable mysteries. I am, therefore, quite ready, with Mr. Balfour, to reject naturalism, but, on the same grounds, I also reject the transcendental theology. Attainable truth is equally independent of all such theories; and were it otherwise, we should be doomed to hopeless scepticism. Mr. Balfour's analogy, therefore, apparently upsets his conclusion. I believe in heat, and I believe in the conscience. I reject the atoms, and I reject the doctrine of atonement. I reject it, if it be meant for science, because, so far from explaining the facts, the facts explain how the false doctrine was generated. I reject it, if it is meant for philosophy, because, like other transcendental theories, it leads to hopeless controversies, and appears to me to be incredible as soon as any such theology as is tenable by a philosopher is substituted for the crude theology of a savage.

We are driven to scepticism, then, if we first de-

clare that scientific knowledge depends upon metaphysical theory; and then that all metaphysical theory is moonshine. I do not accept the first principle; and I hold that the danger to morals from metaphysical difficulties is pretty much the same as the danger that the stars will leave their courses if we adopt a wrong theory of an astronomy. We fancy that when we are explaining facts, we are, somehow, creating them; as the meteorologist in *Rasselas* observed the clouds till he came to think that he caused the rain. The facts upon which morality depends are the facts that men have certain emotions; that mothers love their children; that there are such things as pity, and sympathy, and public spirit; and that there are social instincts upon the growth of which depends the vitality of the race. We may, of course, ask how more precisely these emotions act, and what functions they discharge. We may make historical and psychological and metaphysical inquiries; and we may end, if ever we reach such a consummation, by establishing what we may call a science of ethics. But the facts do not depend upon the explanation. The illusion of their dependence is easily produced. You make your theory of morality, and then you define morality as a belief in the object required by your theory. It follows, of course, that morality will disappear with the belief—or

else that your theory is wrong. Morality, said some people, is a belief in future rewards and punishments. If that belief disappears, morality—that is, their morality—must disappear too. But that morality—taken as the actual sentiment which they have erroneously defined—should disappear also, no more follows than it follows that heat will disappear when we discover that there is no such thing as the old imaginary substance of heat. The doctrine is now more generally urged in a different form. Theology, it is said, is essential to morality. Such bold assertions may be best met by a dogmatic assertion of the inverse case. Theology, as I hold, is not the source of the moral instincts, but, under certain conditions, derives its real power from them. Theology, in the first place, is a word including not only heterogeneous but contradictory meanings,—Baal and Jehovah, the Mumbo-jumbo of the negro and Spinoza's "ens absolute infinitum". To the enormous majority of the human race, the more metaphysical conception is hopelessly unintelligible. When a savage expresses his crude sense of duties to the tribe under the form of belief in an ancestral ghost, is the morality made by the belief, or the belief generated by the incipient moral emotion? Does he believe in God or really in a man like himself, and respected precisely because he is like himself? Is not the truth

tacitly acknowledged by the more philosophical religions? Their adherents admit that the God of philosophy is too abstract a Being to excite any emotion; he fades into Nature or the Unknowable, and it is impossible to love one whom, by his very definition, you can neither benefit nor injure and whose omnipotence makes even justice a mockery. Therefore, they make a God out of a man, and by boldly combining in words two contradictory sets of attributes, make what in theology is called a mystery, and in common sense called by a different name. Does not that amount to confessing that the true source of morality is in the human affections of like for like, and not in that sentiment towards a transcendental object of which you have chosen to make your definition? And, finally, if we ask what is the relation of theology to morality, from a historical point of view, we see the same result. Undoubtedly, theology has been a bulwark of morality in one way. It has expressed the veneration of mankind for the most deeply-seated customs of the race. It has been the form through which, though not the cause owing to which, men have expressed the importance of adhering to certain established institutions of the highest importance to mankind. Briefly, therefore, it represents the conservative instincts. But, for that reason, it has naturally lagged behind an ad-

vancing morality. The newer religions have been precisely protests against the objectionable conduct of the old-fashioned deities who retained the manners and customs of a more barbarous period; and have, therefore, been regarded by the older faith, sometimes with justice, as atheistic. Without referring to the familiar cases, I am content to appeal to the present day. What are the relative positions of the theologian and his opponent during the modern phase of evolution? The theologian has, in the main, maintained the sanctity of old institutions and customs; and I do not doubt that he has rendered a useful service. But the demand for justice, for the abolition of slavery, of the hardships of the poor and oppressed, the desire to construct society upon a wholesomer ideal, has been generated, not by theological speculation, but by the new relations into which men have been brought and the new sentiments developed. It has been accepted most fully by men hostile to all theology, by the free-thinker, the atheist, and the materialist, whom the orthodox denounces as criminal. Doubtless the denouncer has excuses: the reformer may err in the direction of excessive demolition; but the very survival of the older creeds depends, as we all see, upon their capacity for assimilating and finding utterance for the moral convictions which have arisen outside of

their limits, and, generally, in defence of their authority. To say, therefore, that the moral order depends upon the survival of the metaphysical theory seems to me to be inverting the true relation.

I end by suggesting what is to my mind the true moral of these speculations. The vanity of philosophising means the vanity of certain philosophical pretensions; of the chimerical belief that the philosopher lays down the first principles of belief in ethics or in other departments of life, in such a sense that the destinies of the race or of knowledge depend upon accepting and applying his principles. His function is a humbler one, though one of vast importance. The great philosophical systems have vanished, though they have cleared the air. They were primitive attempts at construction; results of the fact that we have to act before we can think; and to assume postulates which can only be verified or falsified by the slow experience of ages. But the process by which truth is advanced is not confined to the philosopher; or perhaps we should rather say that some sort of crude philosophy is embedded even in the feeblest and earliest speculations of mankind. Our thoughts are guided by an implicit logic long before we have even a conception of logic in the abstract, or have the least thought of codifying and tabulating its formulæ. So

who begins to make a tool is exempli-
 the mechanical principle which will not be
 at into accurate and abstract language till countless
 generations have passed. Every one at the present
 day who is using his wits is philosophising after a
 fashion, and is contributing towards the advancement
 of philosophy. He is increasing the mass of still
 more or less chaotic knowledge, the whole of which
 is to that philosopher what the particular set of facts
 is to the student of physical science. The philosopher
 has not to evolve first principles out of himself, so
 much as to discover what are the principles which
 have been unconsciously applied; to eliminate the
 obsolete elements; to bring the new into harmony; to
 verify them, or describe how they may be verified; and
 so to work towards the unification and systematisa-
 tion of knowledge in general. Probably he will make
 a great many blunders in his task; but it may be
 some comfort to reflect that even blunders are often
 useful, and that he is not in the terribly responsible
 position of really framing laws for the universe or for
 man, but only of clearing up or codifying the laws
 which are already in operation.

Mar. 16. 1902

FORGOTTEN BENEFACTORS.

I WAS reading not long ago some remarks * which
 impressed me at the time, and upon which, as it
 came to pass, I have had reason to reflect more
 seriously. The writer dwelt upon the vast services
 which have been rendered to the race by men of
 whom all memory has long since faded away. Com-
 pare, he said, the England of Alfred with the England
 of Victoria; think of the enormous differences which
 have been brought about in thirty generations; and
 then try to estimate how large a share of all that has
 been done in the interval should be put to the credit
 of thousands who have long sunk into oblivion, and
 whose achievements, by the very necessity of the
 case, can never be properly estimated. A few great
 names mark every period; the great statesmen, the
 great churchmen and warriors, are commemorated
 in our official histories; they are placed upon exalted
 pedestals; and to them is attributed everything that
 was done in their time, though, but for the co-opera-

* See the "Wealth of Nature," in *Essays by a Barrister* [Sir
 James Fitzjames Stephen].

tion of innumerable nameless fellow-labourers, they would not have been provided even with the foundations upon which their work was necessarily based.

This remark recalls the familiar discussion about the importance of the individual. Is the hero whom we are invited to worship everything, or is he next to nothing? Is it true, as some writers put it, that had Cleopatra broken her nose, or had a cannon ball gone a hair's breadth further to the right or left when Napoleon was directing the siege of Toulon, "the whole course of history would have been changed"? Or is it rather true that, as some philosophers would say, no man is indispensable, nor even any man very important: that, if any even of the greatest of men had died of the measles in his infancy, we should have carved a different set of letters upon the pedestals of our statues, but the course of affairs would have run in much the same channel? I will not seek to discuss that old theme, to which it is evident that no very precise answer can be given. It is clearly a question of degree. Nobody can deny that a great man has an influence in the spheres of action and of thought; but to attempt to say how great an influence he has, how far he depends upon others or could be replaced by others, involves considerations lying in the unprofitable region of vague conjecture. This only I wish to note. It seems

often to be suggested that there is something degrading or ungenerous in taking a side against the importance of the hero. It raises a suspicion that you are a valet, capable of supposing that men are distinguished by the quantity of lace on their coats, and not by the intensity of the fire in their souls. And, moreover, the view is fatalistic: it supposes that the destinies of the race are determined by what are denounced as blind "laws," and not by the passions and aspirations which guide their energies. To me it seems that it would be easy enough to retort these imputations. I cannot feel that a man of generous sympathies should be therefore inclined to a doctrine which would tend to make the future of the race a matter of chance. The more you believe in the importance of the great men, the more you have to admit that our progress depends upon the innumerable accidents which may stifle the greatest as easily as the smallest career. If some great social change was so absolutely dependent upon the leader who first put into words the demand upon which it is based, or who led the first forlorn hope which made victory possible, that his loss would have been the loss of his cause, it follows that the cause might have been lost if a crust of bread had gone the wrong way. It ought surely to be pleasanter if we are entitled to hold that we have a stronger

ground of confidence; that the great victories of thought and action prove the diffusion of enthusiasm and courage through a wide circle; and that the fall of the chief is sure to make room for a worthy successor. The wider and deeper the causes of progress, the more confidently we can derive hope from the past, and accept with comparative equanimity even the most painful catastrophes.

Nor can I agree that such a view implies any want of susceptibility to the claims of the hero. I do not think that we can pay homage too cheerfully to the great men who form landmarks in history. I admit, most gladly, that the admiration which we feel for such men; the thrill which stirs us in reading of the great patriots and martyrs of the past; the reverence which we are now and then able to pay to a contemporary—to a Lincoln, proving that political action may represent real faiths, not party formulæ; to a Gordon, impersonating the sense of duty; or a Father Damien, sacrificing his life for the lepers—is one of the invaluable elements of moral cultivation. But I do not see the connection between this and the desire to exalt the glory of the great man by ignoring the unknown who followed in his steps, and often made them possible. I have not so far attained to the cosmopolitan point of view that my blood is not stirred by the very name of Nelson. Nay, however

cosmopolitan I might become, I hope that my sympathies would never blind me to the greatness of the qualities implied in his patriotic devotion. My cosmopolitanism would rather, I hope, lead me to appreciate more generously the similar qualities in his antagonists, and, also, the similar qualities in the "band of brothers" whom he was proud to lead. I should be sorry so to admire Nelson as to forget the sturdy old race of sea dogs who did their duty, and helped him to do his in a memorable way, some ninety years ago. I would rather believe than not that, had Nelson been killed at the Nile, there were many among his followers who, had the chance come to them, would have led the *Victory* at Trafalgar, and have made England impregnable. "I trust we have within this realm five hundred good as he" is surely the more heroic tone. But, to drop the old-fashioned appeal to patriotic spirit, is it not true that, in every department of life, it is more congenial to our generous feelings to remember the existence and the importance of those who have never won a general reputation? This has come to be a commonplace in the sphere of scientific discovery. We find, over and over again, that the great discoverer has been all but anticipated by his rivals; that his fame, if not his real greatness, depends upon the circumstance that he has just anticipated by a year, or,

perhaps, in extreme cases, by a generation, results to which a comparatively second-rate thinker would have been competent a few years later. The winner of the race is apt to monopolise the glory, though he wins only by a hair's breadth. The familiar instance of Darwin and Mr. Wallace is remarkable, not because the relation of the two thinkers was unique, but because, unfortunately, the generosity with which each acknowledged the merit of the other was exceptional. A great discovery is made when the fertile thought is already going through the process of incubation in a whole circle of intelligent minds; and that in which it first comes to the birth, claims, or, at least, receives, the whole merit, by a right of intellectual primogeniture not much more justifiable than the legal right. Admitting, again, in the fullest sense, the value and the difficulty of that last step which has to be made in order to reach the crowning triumph, it would surely be ungenerous to forget the long series of previous explorations by which alone it was made possible. There must have been countless forgotten Newtons and Descartes', who, in their day, had to exert equal powers in order to discover what are now the most familiar truths; to invent the simplest systems of arithmetical notation, or solve the earliest geometrical problems, without which neither a Newton nor a Descartes would have

been possible. And what is true in science is, surely, equally true of activities which touch most of us more nearly. Of all undeniable claims to greatness I suppose the most undeniable to be the claim of the founders of religions. Their disciples are so much impressed by their greatness that they regard them as supernatural beings, or, in other words, as beings who are the sole and indispensable causes of all the consequences attributed to the prevalence of their doctrines. We are told, constantly, and often as though it were too obvious to need proof, that every moral improvement which has taken place in the world since the origin of Christianity, is due to Christianity, and that Christianity itself is entirely due to its founder. Human nature was utterly corrupt until the Deity became incarnate in the form of a Jewish peasant; and every social or moral step which has since been made in advance—and not one of the unfortunate backslidings by which the advance has since been trammelled—is a direct consequence of that stupendous event. This is the theory of the importance of the individual, raised, so to speak, to its very highest potency. We not only attribute the most important and far-reaching of all changes to a single agent, but declare that that agent cannot have been human, and indeed cannot have been less than the first cause of all changes. I

shall not, of course, discuss the plausibility of a doctrine which, if accepted, breaks the whole chain of cause and effect, and makes the later history of the world not an evolution of previously operative process, but the result of an abrupt, mysterious interference from without, incommensurable with any other set of spiritual forces. I am content to say that to my mind the doctrine becomes daily more impossible to any one who thinks seriously and tries to picture to himself distinctly the true nature of the great world processes. What is to my purpose is, that it seems to me to be not only infinitely more credible, but also more satisfactory and more generous—if there be properly a question of generosity—to do justice to the disciples as well as to the master—to believe that the creed was fermenting in the hearts and minds of millions of human beings; and that, although the imperfect and superstitious elements by which it was alloyed were due to the medium in which it was propagated, yet, on the other hand, it succeeded so far as it corresponded to the better instincts of great masses of men, struggling blindly and through many errors to discover rules of conduct and modes of conceiving the universe more congenial than the old to their better nature, and prepared to form a society by crystallising round the nucleus which best corresponded to their aspirations.

When so regarded, it seems to me, and only when so regarded, we can see in the phenomenon something which may give us solid ground for hopes of humanity, and enable us to do justice to countless obscure benefactors. The corruption of human nature, as theologians sometimes tell us, expresses a simple fact. Undoubtedly, it expresses a fact which nobody, so far as I know, ever thought of denying—the fact that there are bad instincts in human nature; that many men are cruel, sensual, and false; and that every man is more or less liable to succumb to temptation. But the essential meaning of the old theological dogma was, I take it, something different. It meant that man was so corrupt that he could only be made good by a miracle; that even his apparent virtues are splendid sins unless they come from divine grace; and, in short, that men cannot be really elevated without supernatural interference. If all that is good in men comes from their religions, and if religions are only explicable as inspirations from without, that, no doubt, logically follows. I prefer, myself, to believe that, though all men are weak, and a good many utter scoundrels; yet human nature does contain good principles; that those principles tend, however slow and imperfect may be the process, gradually to obtain the mastery; and that the great religions of the races, while

indicating the intellectual and moral shortcomings of mankind, indicate also the gradual advance of ethical ideals, worked out by the natural and essential tendencies of the race. And thus, as it seems to me, this conception of the mode of growth of religions and of morality, which gathers strength as we come to take a more reasonable view of the world's history, is closely connected with the doctrine that, instead of ascribing all good achievement to the hero who drops from heaven, or springs spontaneously from the earth, we should steadily remember that he is only possible, and his work can only be successfully secured, by the tacit co-operation of the innumerable unknown persons in whose hearts his words find an echo because they are already feeling after the same ideal which is in him more completely embodied.

In our judgment of such cases there is, then, an injustice so far as we make a false estimate of the right distribution of praise and gratitude. It would be an injustice, in a stricter sense, to the persons ignored, if we regarded such gratitude as the appropriate and main reward of a noble life. I need not repeat the commonplaces of moralists as to the real value of posthumous fame, nor inquire whether it implies an illusion, nor how far the desire for such fame is, in point of fact, a strong motive with many people. This only I will note—that obscurity is a

condition, and by no means an altogether unpleasant condition, of much of the very best work that is done. The general or the statesman is conspicuous in connection with successful enterprise in which his subordinates necessarily do a great part of the labour. It is impossible for the outside world to form a correct judgment in such cases; and, therefore, there is no hardship to the particular persons concerned, if they are simply ignored where they would, certainly, be misjudged; and if they, therefore, work in obscurity, content with the approval of the very few who can estimate their merits. There is a compensation, as we see, when we reflect upon the moral disadvantages of conspicuous station. Literary people, for example, must be very unobservant if they do not notice how demoralising is the influence of public applause, and the constant inducement to court notoriety. It is unwholesome to live in an atmosphere which constantly stimulates and incites the weaknesses to which we are most liable. And many of our first writers must, I should fancy, feel pangs of self-humiliation when they contrast the credit which they have got for popular work with the very scanty recognition which comes to many who have applied equal talents to the discharge of duties often far more beneficial to mankind, but, from their nature, performed in the shade. "I," such a

man, I fancy, must sometimes say to himself, "am quoted in every newspaper; I am puffed, and praised, and denounced; not to know me is to write yourself down a dunce; and, yet, have I done as much for the good of my kind as this or that humble friend, who would be astonished were his name ever to be uttered in public?" Some such thought, for example, is inspired by Johnson's most pathetic verses, when the great lexicographer, the acknowledged dictator of English literature, thought of the poor dependant, the little humble quack doctor, Levett, who was content, literally, to be fed with the crumbs from his tables. But the obscure dependant, as the patron felt, had done all that he could to alleviate the sum of human misery.

His virtues walked their narrow round,
Nor made a pause, nor left a void;
And, sure, the Eternal Master found
The single talent well employed.

Have I not, Johnson seems to have felt, really done less to soothe misery by my *Dictionary* and my *Ramblers* than this obscure labourer in the back lanes of London, of whom, but for my verses, no one would have heard even the name?

A full answer to questions suggested by these thoughts would, perhaps, require an estimate of the relative value of different aims and different functions

in life; and, for such an estimate, there are no adequate grounds. In one of Browning's noblest poems, Rabbi Ben Ezra—of whom I must say that he strikes me as being a little too self-complacent—puts a relevant question. "Who," he asks, "shall arbitrate?"

Ten men love what I hate;
Shun what I follow, slight what I receive;
Ten who, in ears and eyes,
Match me; we all surmise,
They this thing and I that: whom shall my soul believe?

And he answers or suggests one condition of a satisfactory answer, by saying that we are not to take the coarse judgment of the world, which goes by the work achieved. We must remember—

All instincts immature,
All purposes unsure,
That, weighed not as his work, yet swelled the man's account;
Thoughts hardly to be packed
Into a narrow act;
Fancies that broke through language and escaped;
All I would never be,
All men ignored in me,
That I was worth to God, whose wheel the pitcher shaped.

If it were proper to treat a poetical utterance of this kind like a deliberate philosophical theory, I might wish to argue the point a little with the rabbi. But, at any rate, he points to considerations which

show how little any one can judge of merit by any tangible and generally accessible test. I am content to say that this sentiment gives one—and a very impressive—answer to a problem which presses upon us the more as we grow older. It is natural for a man who feels that he has done most of his work, that the night is coming, and, as it seems, coming with accelerated speed; who feels, too, that whatever he has done or may do, he can no longer have the approval of those whose approval was dear to him as his breath;—it is natural for such a man to look back, to take stock more or less of his own performances perhaps, and at any rate to endeavour to estimate at their true worth the services which he has received from others. What, he may ask, has he done with his talents? what little fragment has he achieved of what might once have been in his power? The answer is pretty sure to have a very melancholy side to it; and it will lead to the question, what part of that fragment was really worth doing? What were the few really solid services which he may set off as some satisfaction to his self-esteem, against his countless errors and his wanderings in wrong directions, and his attempts to achieve the impossible, and the waste of energy upon the trifling and the worthless in which he is pretty sure to have spent a very large proportion of his time? When we try to return a

verdict upon such issues, we feel painfully to how many illusions we are subject. When we are young we naturally accept the commonplaces, and do not question the ideals amid which we happen to have grown up; we are not conscious of the movement which we share. As long as we are floating with the current, we are not even aware that any current exists. We take our own little world to be the fixed base, quite unconscious that it is all the time whirling and spinning along a most complex course. And so it is difficult, even if the thought of making the attempt ever occurs to us, to try to occupy the position of a bystander looking on at life from outside, and endeavouring to pronounce some general opinion as to its merits or defects—its happiness or misery as a whole. "What a queer place this is!" I remember a man once saying to me abruptly; and I thought that he was referring to the steamboat on which we were fellow-passengers. I found that he had been suddenly struck by the oddity of the universe in general; and it seemed to me that there was a great deal to be said for a remark which seldom occurs to those people who take things for granted. We are roused sometimes by a philosopher who professes pessimism or optimism, to ask and to try to answer such questions. The answers, we know, are apt to be painfully discordant.

Is the world on the whole a scene of misery, of restless desires, proving that we are miserable now, and doomed never to obtain satisfaction? is it our only wisdom to give up the will to live; to hope that all this visible and tangible scenery is so much illusion, and to aspire to sink into Nirvana? Shall we try to conquer all earthly appetites by a thorough-going asceticism, and cultivate those spiritual emotions which can only find full satisfaction in another and a better world? Or shall we agree that, after all, the love of the true and the beautiful, or, it may be, the physically pleasurable, gives a real solid comfort for the time, which it would be idle to drop for a shadow? Is the world a scene of probation, in which we are to be fitted for higher spheres beyond human ken by the hearty and strenuous exertion of every faculty that we possess? or shall we say that such action is a good in itself, which requires to be supplemented by no vision of any ulterior end? Shall we say that this is the best of all possible worlds because the fittest always tends to prevail, or that it is the worst because even the greatest wretchedness which is compatible with bare existence can still survive?

Philosophers, no doubt, contradict each other, because even philosophers are not exempt from the universal weakness. The explanation that pessimism means a disordered liver, and the counter remark that

optimism means a cold heart and a good digestion, are too familiar to need exposition. Each man's macrocosm is apt to be related to his microcosm, as the convex to the concave of a curve. To say the world is disagreeable, means that I find it disagreeable; and that may be either my own fault or the world's. Nor is it easy to correct the personal error by observation, for the observer carries himself and his illusions with him. Has such-and-such a life been a happy one? How are we to decide? We are often subject to what may be called the dramatic illusion. We judge by the catastrophe, by the success or failure of the assumed end. We see a noble young man struck down by some accident, and we think of his career sadly, because the promise has not been fulfilled. Is it not equally reasonable to say that the promise was itself a blessing? that the man we regret had his twenty or thirty years of hopefulness, confidence, and happiness, and that that was a clear gain even if we lose the result which we might have anticipated? Or we are impressed by the more exciting incidents of a life, the blows which crushed a man at intervals; and we forget all the monotonous years of tranquil happiness which, if we apply an arithmetical test, may have occupied by far the greater part of his existence. Southey, for example, argues that although we remember Cowper chiefly

for his terrible mental suffering, we shall find, if we add up the moments of happiness and misery, that he probably had, on the balance, a life of much more enjoyment than torture. So, when we speak of the misery of a nation at the time of some great trouble—the French Revolution, for example—it is difficult to remember how small was the proportion of actual sufferers; how many thousands or millions of children were enjoying their little sports, utterly ignorant of the distant storm; how many mothers were absorbed in watching their children; and how many quiet commonplace people were going about their daily peaceful labour, pretty much as usual, and with only a vague—and possibly pleasurable—excitement at the news, which occasionally drifted to them, of the catastrophes in a different sphere. Carlyle, in one of his most vivid and famous passages, has incidentally drawn the contrast. Or, if we try to form an estimate of the balance of happiness and misery through any portion of the race, and appeal to experience for an answer, we must certainly remember how limited is the field of observation, even of the best informed, and the most impartial; how rigidly they are confined for their direct knowledge to one little section of one part of the race; and how the vast majority—the thousand millions or so who are altogether beyond their ken—are known to them only by

statistical tables or the casual reports of superficial observers.

As there are so many difficulties in forming an estimate, as we are not agreed as to the true ends of human life, nor as to the degrees in which those ends are actually attained, nor as to the efficacy of the various causes which determine the success or failure of the means employed, it becomes any one to put forward his own opinion upon the topics to which such considerations apply, with all modesty. And, yet, I think that I may dwell upon some truths which may be admitted by those who differ upon these difficult problems, and, as I fancy, deserve more weight than they generally receive, even though they have become commonplaces. The main condition of human happiness, say some people, is physical health. A man whose organs are all working satisfactorily cannot fail to be happy under any but very abnormal conditions; as, conversely, a grain of sand in the wrong place will make any life a burden. No one will dispute the truth contained in such *dicta*; and, perhaps, as we realise more distinctly the importance of sound health to our neighbours and to our descendants, as well as to ourselves, we shall lay greater stress upon the conduct which is conducive to its preservation. We shall see that what is, apparently, a mere dictate of personal prudence, has,

also, its ethical aspect. But, without dwelling upon this view, we may apply the analogy to society. Whatever morality precisely means, and whatever happiness means, it clearly indicates what we call—and I think that it is no mere metaphor—a healthy state of society. This, again, implies, first of all, the health of those domestic relations which are as the ultimate molecular forces which bind together the social tissue. The society, we may say without hesitation, in which the reciprocal duties of husbands and wives, parents and children, are instinctively recognised and habitually observed, has, so far, secured the most deeply-seated and essential condition of happiness and virtue; the society in which the union of married people normally produces harmony, and the absolute identity of interests and affections, in which children are brought up in a pure home atmosphere, with an embodiment of the beauty of domestic love always before their eyes, imbibing unconsciously the tradition of a high moral standard, and so prepared to repay, in due time, to others the services lavishly and ungrudgingly bestowed upon them by their elders,—so far represents perfectly sound health. The degree in which any ethical theory recognises and reveals the essential importance of the family relation is, I think, the best test of its approximation to the truth. An unworthy

view of domestic happiness may lead to the ascetic view which sets up a sham and Quixotic ideal; or to the cynical view which regards it as a mere case of selfish indulgence. I do not deny that the relation, like all other human relations, may require modification as circumstances change. Difficulties arise, as when we notice the great social changes which have broken up ancient ties, and have tended to weaken the family bond by facilitating desertion, and increasing the floating population. And many socialist schemes appear at first sight to be, and sometimes are, consciously designed to weaken the sense of responsibility of parents. I, of course, cannot now discuss a point which is, undoubtedly, of the highest importance; but I am certainly convinced that the merits of any change must be tested by its tendency to preserve, and, if possible, intensify the strength of this underlying bond upon which the welfare of society depends far more intimately than upon any other human relation.

If this be true, it follows also that to those activities which knit families together, which help to enlarge the highest ideal of domestic life, we owe a greater debt than to any other kind of conduct. And to this I add that, as I believe, the highest services of this kind are rendered by persons condemned, or perhaps I should say privileged, to live

in obscurity; whose very names will soon be forgotten, and who are entirely eclipsed by people whose services, though not equally valuable, are by their nature more public. To prove such an assertion is, of course, impossible. I give it only as my personal impression—for what it is worth, after any deductions you may please to make upon the score of the great fallibility of such impressions; and only because, correct or otherwise, it may serve to bring out aspects of the truth which we are apt to neglect. I have lived long enough to have had opportunities of seeing many eminent men and women. I have insensibly formed some kind of estimate of the services which they have rendered to me and my like; and I record, as far as I can, the result upon my own convictions. I will put aside for the moment the half-dozen men of really first-rate eminence,—the men whose names are written upon all the great intellectual and social movements of the century. I will think for the present only of those who may be placed in the second rank; of those who do not profess to have originated, but only to have diffused, important thoughts; who have acted as lieutenants to the great leaders, and become known to their contemporaries, with little prospect of filling any important place in the memory of their successors. Yet even such men bulk far more largely

in our eyes than multitudes of men and women whose names will never be known outside their own little parish, or even their family circles. And then I ask myself, how far the estimate thus formed corresponds to the real value of the services performed. I think that I can speak most easily by deserting the line of abstract argument, and endeavouring to draw a portrait or two, which you need not assume to correspond too closely to particular facts. I mean to suggest reflections which will really apply in many representative cases, and to refer to typical instances of general truths. I will first mention one such case which happened to strike me forcibly at the time, and which no one here, I am quite certain, will be able to identify. Long years ago I knew a young man at college; he was so far from being intellectually eminent that he had great difficulty in passing his examinations; he died from the effects of an accident within a very short time after leaving the university, and hardly any one would now remember his name. He had not the smallest impression that there was anything remarkable about himself, and looked up to his teachers and his more brilliant companions with a loyal admiration which would have made him wonder that they should ever take notice of him. And yet I often thought then, and I believe, in looking back, that I thought

rightly, that he was of more real use to his contemporaries than any one of the persons to whose influence they would most naturally refer as having affected their development. The secret was a very simple one. Without any special intellectual capacity, he somehow represented with singular completeness a beautiful moral type. He possessed the "simple faith miscalled simplicity," and was so absolutely unselfish, so conspicuously pure in his whole life and conduct, so unsuspicious of evil in others, so sweet and loyal in his nature, that to know him was to have before one's eyes an embodiment of some of the most lovable and really admirable qualities that a human being can possess. He was a living exemplification of the truth which some great humorists have embodied in their writings, the truth that simplicity at which fools laugh may be venerable to wise observers. Young men were not always immaculate in those days: I don't know that they are now; some of them probably were vicious in conduct, and might be cynical in the views which they openly expressed. But whatever might be their failings, they were at the age when all but the depraved—that is, I hope and fully believe, all but a very small minority—were capable of being deeply impressed by this concrete example. They might affect to ridicule, but it was impossible that even the

ridicule should not be of the kindly sort; blended and tempered with something that was more like awe—profound respect, at least, for the beauty of soul that underlay the humble exterior. The direct moral addresses which took the form of eloquent sermons or of good advice naturally gained an incomparably higher reputation for those who uttered them. But, considering the facility with which the impressions so made evaporate from the minds of the hearers, I often thought that this obscure influence, the more impressive when one felt it because of its entire unconsciousness, probably did far more to stimulate good feelings and higher aspirations among his companions than all the official exhortations to which they ever listened. He would have been unfeignedly surprised to hear, what I most sincerely believe to be the truth, that his tutor owed incomparably more to his living exemplification of what is meant by a character of unblemished purity and simplicity, than he owed to the tutor whose respectable platitudes he received with unaffected humility.

The case—for various reasons—impressed me deeply; and I have often thought of it and of the principle which it illustrates in later years. I once knew, for example, a woman whose whole life was devoted to domestic duties, and who confessed to me that she had sometimes felt a touch of humiliation

when she thought how narrow was her own sphere of action, while her husband was daily deciding upon great questions of high political importance. Some women would have drawn the conclusion, that the exclusion of women from political activity was a grievance to be abated; and such people might receive with scorn the suggestion that the discharge of the domestic duty might possibly be as important as the discharge of the more conspicuous function. The argument about the proper sphere of women is now generally treated with contempt; and I am perfectly ready to admit that it begs the question, and is often a mere utterance of blind prejudice. No one, I hope, could assert more willingly than I, that the faculties of women should be cultivated as fully as possible, and that every sphere in which their faculties can be effectively applied should be thrown open to them. But the doctrine sometimes tacitly confounded with this, that the sphere generally assigned to women is necessarily lower or less important than others, is not to be admitted, because the contradictory may be misapplied. The domestic influence is, no doubt, confined within narrower limits; but then, within those limits it is incomparably stronger and more certain of effect. The man or woman can really mould the character of a little circle, and determine the whole life of one little section of the next genera-

tion; when it may be very difficult to say whether the influence which they can bring to bear upon a class or a nation is really perceptible at all, or does not even operate in the direction opposite to that intended. And I could not help thinking that a woman who was bringing up sons and daughters ready to quit themselves like brave men and women in the great struggle of life, might be doing something more really important than her conspicuous husband, who was, after all, only part of a vast and complicated machinery, nominally directed by him, but, in reality, controlling all his energy, and, not impossibly, working out the very results which he most disapproved.

It is, therefore, with no reference to any of the political theories of women's rights, and so forth, that I venture to insist upon this topic. I think that we habitually under-estimate the enormous value of the services, whether of man or woman, done in the shade, and confined within a very limited area. Let me attempt, again, to draw a portrait, not all imaginary, which may explain, at least, what I often feel—the contrast between the real worth of such lives and the recognition which they can ever receive. Wordsworth, in one of those poems which show best how true and tender were his moral instincts, has described one who was—

A perfect woman, nobly planned
To warn, to comfort, and command;
And yet a spirit too, and bright
With something of an angel light.

The words have often come to me of late, till I fancy that I could supply a commentary. The woman of whom Wordsworth speaks was, when he first saw her, a "phantom of delight," an embodiment of feminine beauty, and, as such, possessing a characteristic perhaps superfluous from a moral point of view. I have known and know women, not exactly beautiful, before whom I would gladly bow as deeply as I would if they were beautiful as Helen of Troy. But a poet must be allowed to take pleasure in beauty, and we may grant to it a certain place that it deserves among higher qualities. For it does so when the possessor is absolutely—not unaware of the fact, for that is hardly possible, nor, perhaps, desirable—but absolutely untouched by any vanity or self-consciousness. The beauty, one may say, gives, at least, an opportunity for displaying a quality which otherwise would not have so good an occasion of manifestation. And, moreover, there is a beauty of the rarest and most exquisite, which, if not the product, is, or at least seems to be, the spontaneous accompaniment of nobility of mind and character. Some persons, by a singular felicity, possess beauty as one of their essential attributes; it seems to be not an accident

or an addition, but a part of their essence, which must mould every detail, which shines through body as well as soul, and is but the outward and visible sign of all that is sweet and elevated. Wordsworth's ideal woman is—

Not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food,
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears and smiles:

and yet displays equally—

The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill.

We cannot, even in our thoughts, separate the artistic homage which we pay to the external appearance, and that which we pay to the inner qualities, of which they are apparently the inevitable and predestined symbol. We have before us the ideal—the type which reconciles all the conditions of human life, physical and moral—the "perfect woman," who is also the fitting vehicle of the angel light.

But it is, of course, upon the qualities symbolised and not upon the outward symbols that we must insist. I will, therefore, say, that the inward beauty, whether fully represented or not by the outward form, implies, in the first place, the absence of all those qualities which tend to lower and vulgarise life. What we call the worldly view,

for example, of love and marriage, is simply unintelligible to such a nature. Love means, to it, an absolute self-surrender, and the complete fusion of its own life with the life of the beloved object. It can only be granted in return for a reciprocal surrender; and becomes the mutual passion by which fear and distrust are utterly cast out; and the intensity proves not liability to weak illusions, but the sure insight of the lofty instincts which cannot fail to recognise corresponding instincts in others. To the lower mind, such a character appears to be too highly strung, too impassioned, romantic, and careless of the solid advantages which secure at least comfort. To those of more or less congenial sentiment, it will rather appear to imply a spirit which, because it breathes a higher element than that at which men habitually live, perceives also more distinctly what are the truest and deepest sources of all that deserves to be called real happiness. To live in an atmosphere of the strongest and most unqualified affection, to have the very substance of life woven out of the unreserved love of a worthy object, is its ideal; and that ideal represents, I am convinced, the highest and purest happiness that can be enjoyed in this world.

Suppose, now, that one so endowed is struck by one of those terrible blows which shiver the very

foundations of life; which make the outside world a mere discordant nightmare, and seem to leave for the only reality a perpetual and gnawing pain, which lulls for an instant only to be revived by every contact with facts. Sorrow becomes the element in which one lives and moves. Consolation, according to the familiar phrase, is idle; for the vulgar notion of consoling is that which Sir Walter Scott attributes to one of his characters: it is to try to prove that the very thing for which we offer consolation has not happened—in other words, to undertake an enterprise which is obviously hopeless and illusory. Yet the greatest test of true nobility of character is its power of turning even the bitterest grief to account. The lofty and simple nature sorrows; it does not attempt to shut its eyes to the full extent of the calamity, nor seek to distract itself by a forgetfulness which might obscure its most sacred visions of the past; nor, on the other hand, to make a parade of its sensibility, or try to foster or stimulate enervating emotions. It knows instinctively that grief, terrible as it is, is yet, in another sense, an invaluable possession. The sufferer who has eaten his bread with herbs learns, as the poet puts it, to know the heavenly powers. For he or she acquires a deeper and keener sympathy with all who are desolate and afflicted; and the natural affections become blended,

if with a certain melancholy, yet with that quick and delicate perception of the suffering of others which gives the only consolation worthy of the name—the sense of something soothing and softening and inspiring in the midst of the bitterest agony. Grief, so taken, may be stunning and deadening for the time; it may make life a heavy burden, from which hope and eager interest have disappeared: “weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable”; but by slow degrees it undergoes a transmutation into more steady and profound love of whatsoever may still be left. The broken and mangled fibres imperceptibly find new attachments; and the only solution of the terrible dilemma is reached when time, which heals the actual laceration, enables the sufferer to feel that the new ties do not imply infidelity to the objects still beloved, but are a continuous development of the indelible emotions, and that the later activities are but a carrying on of the old duties, made more sacred and solemn by the old grief and its associations.

A lofty nature which has profited by passing through the furnace acquires claims not only upon our love but upon our reverence. It becomes perhaps within the little circle with which it is familiar the obvious and immediate resort whenever some blow of sorrow or sickness has fallen upon one of its fellows. The figure which I attempt truly to

describe is happily not unfamiliar. We have all, I hope, known some one who is instinctively called to mind whenever there is need of the loving kindness which seems so obvious and spontaneous that it does not even occur to the bestower to connect the conduct with self-sacrifice. Such persons appear to be formed by nature for ministering angels, and move among us unconscious of their claims to our devotion, and bringing light into darkness by their simple presence with as little thought that they deserve our gratitude as that they ought to emerge from obscurity. Happiness, peaceful and contented at least, if not the old bright and confident happiness, may come in time; and new spheres be bound together by the attractive force of a character which, if it is not more intrinsically lovable, has gained a more pathetic charm from its experience. The desire to relieve suffering has become a settled instinct; and, even when there is no special appeal to it, is incessantly overflowing in those “little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love” which, according to Wordsworth again, are the “best portion of a good man’s life”. Whether that be quite true I know not; but in so far as such acts seem to testify most unequivocally to the constant flow of a current of sympathetic tenderness, always ready to seize upon every occasion of giving happiness, on a

child's birthday as on the parent's deathbed, they perhaps speak to us most convincingly of an all-pervading sweetness of character. An assiduous and watchful desire to show kindness, which makes a perpetual succession of such little attentions a part of the practical religion of the doer, may generate a corresponding love even more forcibly than the sacrifices made in obedience to a more conspicuous appeal for help.

The value of such a life as I have tried imperfectly to indicate is not to be estimated by the number of good actions performed, or by any definite list of the particular consequences achieved. It may be hard to say how many pangs have been soothed, how much happiness has been added in special cases, by one who goes through life absorbed in such activities. But above and beyond all the separate instances, such a person,—the object only to a few, perhaps, of love and reverence, but to those few the object of those feelings in the most unreserved and unequivocal form,—is something far more than a source of any number of particular benefits. To reckon up and estimate the value of such benefits is a conceivable undertaking; but we cannot attempt to calculate the value of a spiritual force which has moulded our lives, which has helped by a simple consciousness of its existence to make us gentler, nobler, and purer in

our thoughts of the world; which has constantly set before us a loftier ideal than we could frame for ourselves; which has bestowed upon us an ever-present criterion of the goodness or badness of our own motives by our perception of the light in which they appear to a simple and elevated character; which has made every cowardly and worldly thought shrink away abashed in the presence of noble instincts; which has given us a sympathy so close and constant that, as with the light of the sun, we are apt to be unconscious of its essential importance to us until some accident makes us realise the effect of its eclipse; and which, therefore, has in some sense become a part of ourselves, a restraining and elevating and softening impulse, to which we cling as to the worthiest and most indispensable of our possessions.

I am not speaking from imagination. I am trying to utter convictions springing from my personal experience, and which I feel—most painfully—that I cannot adequately express. I could not say more, even if by saying more I could express myself adequately, without a sense of a kind of profanity for uttering what should be kept for a few. But though I speak for myself, I hope and I entirely believe that I am therefore speaking for many others also. There are few who have the eyes to see

who have not recognised some such light shining upon their lives, and as one main source of what they have done or said if least unworthy. I fancy that the thought which naturally occurs to us when we reflect upon such an influence will be: was I, could I, be worthy of it? what am I that such goodness should have come to me? or, what, if anything, have I done to transmit to others the blessings conferred upon me? Such questions have various aspects, and I do not quite see how they could be reduced to a form admitting of a bare logical answer. It now seems to me almost unbecoming to dwell upon the comparison which I contemplated at starting. I imagined a man who has made some such impression upon the world as is recognised by public reputation, to compare his own achievement with such achievements as these, which are absolutely private, and neither seek nor desire any public reward. In truth, the two things are, perhaps, strictly incommensurable. They must be measured by different standards, and are of importance in different spheres. And yet I must try to say this much. The achievements to which I have referred as in their nature public and recognisable, should certainly be considered with gratitude. Yet, when we attempt to estimate their worth we are sensible of terrible drawbacks. I have passed, let us say, a

measure admirably useful, or written a book which has made a mark. Certainly I have done a good action. But what if I had not done it? Were there not hundreds of people who would have been only too glad to take my place? I have been successful because I happen to have been in the front rank, which was impelled by thousands of eager supporters. I have said just a little better than my rivals what they were all striving to say; and my highest reward will be that my name will be attached in my own generation, and possibly even in the next, to some particular opinion which yet would have come to the birth without me. I have made a certain commotion on the surface for a moment or two, but the ripple will die away in a few years; and, important as I may seem to myself, I have only to look back for a generation to recognise the plain fact that there have not been at any period more than one or two conspicuous workers the products of whose activity can be distinctly recognised at the present day. Even in regard to them, it is often doubtful whether they did more harm or good; whether they did not direct human energy along the wrong paths, and do as much in giving currency to fallacies as in extending permanent truths.

Now, after making such deductions, which to me, at least, seem to be essentially necessary, we can, I

think, do justice to the truth which is contained in Browning's poem. You are not, he seems to say, to measure the worth of life by the amount of work done in it, by the tangible and obvious results which can be tested by the world's coarse finger and thumb. Rather, he suggests, the value depends upon the excellence of the soul which is fashioned into "heaven's consummate cup" by the stress of the potter's wheel; by the joys and sorrows, the trials and triumphs, which have affected it in its passage through life. I should prefer to say that the kind of dilemma so suggested is not really to the purpose. The rabbi may seem to speak, as I said, with a little too much complacency, if he be interpreted as sharing the feeling which is often, however unjustly, attributed to Goethe—that his supreme end was the cultivation of his own nature, and that he regarded himself as a work of art, to be elaborated for its own sake, and enriched by experience even at the cost of others. But in a better interpretation this does not apply: for the very process by which the noble nature is developed and cultivated, implies the closest and most active sympathy with suffering, and an invariable reference to the highest aims of life. It becomes perfect, that is, by constantly rendering invaluable services to others; and there is, therefore, no meaning in drawing a distinction between the

services and the influence upon the soul itself. They are parts of the same indivisible process. What is true and noble, as I think, in the rabbi's doctrine, is that which I have already tried to indicate: namely, that the worth of such a life is not exhausted by a catalogue of the good deeds done, but that, beyond and above all them, remains the inestimable value within its own circle of the very existence of a natural symbol of the good and holy—by the "holy" I understand that which is not only moral, but beautiful by reason of its morality—and the incalculable benefits to it of the pure fountain of all good influences which descend upon all within its reach. The stimulus which is given to the beholders of such a life—by the clear perception that morality does not mean a string of judicious commonplaces, but can be embodied as the spring of a harmonious life, and reveal itself as a concrete flesh-and-blood human being—is something which transcends in value all the particular results which we can tabulate and reckon up. We must think of it, not as the cause of so many external benefits, but as the manifestation of a spiritual force which modifies and raises the characters of all its surroundings. If the sphere within which it distinctly operates is far narrower than that of political or literary achievement, it is also incomparably purer, and works without a single

drawback. Every religion has its saints, and honours them in various ways, not always altogether edifying. But that man is unfortunate who has not a saint of his own—some one in whose presence, or in the very thought of whom, he does not recognise a superior, before whom it becomes him to bow with reverence and gratitude, and who has purified the atmosphere and strengthened the affections in a little circle from which the influence may be transmitted to others. The saint will be forgotten all too soon—long before less valuable, but accidentally more conspicuous, services have passed out of mind—but the moral elevation, even of a small circle, is a benefit which may be propagated indefinitely.

If we cannot hope to preserve the name, we can try to carry on the good work; to maintain the ties which have been formed and propagate the goodwill through widening circles. That, I think, is what every one feels under the stress of the most terrible trials of life. We are shocked by the sense of the inevitable oblivion that will hide all that we loved so well. There is, according to my experience, only one thought which is inspiring, and—if not in the vulgar sense consoling, for it admits the existence of an unspeakable calamity—points, at least, to the direction in which we may gradually achieve something like peace and hopefulness without the slightest disloyalty

to the objects of our love. It is the thought which I can only express by saying that we may learn to feel as if those who had left us had yet become part of ourselves; that we have become so permeated by their influence, that we can still think of their approval and sympathy as a stimulating and elevating power, and be conscious that we are more or less carrying on their work, in their spirit. We find, as Lowell says in his noble ode—

We find in our dull road their shining track;
In every nobler mood
We feel the orient of their spirit glow,
Part of our life's unalterable good,
Of all our saintlier aspiration;
They come transfigured back,
Secure from change in their high-hearted ways,
Beautiful evermore, and with the rays
Of morn on their white shields of expectation.

Alas, he adds, even the best deeds will be hidden before long by "the thoughtless drift of the deciduous years". Yes; they will be forgotten before long, as we too shall be forgotten—the incalculable majority within a generation or two. The thought may be painful, but the reasonable conclusion is, I think, not that we should fret over the inevitable; rather that we should purify our minds from this as from other illusions, and feel ashamed of the selfish desire that

our own names should be preserved when we know that so many who were far better and nobler than ourselves will inevitably be forgotten, and were better and nobler without the stimulus of any such paltry desire. Gratitude to the obscure is, in this sense, I take it, a duty, which we cannot practise without a proportional moral benefit. It enables us to rise above the constant temptation to seek for notoriety at any price, and to make our ultimate aim the achievement of good work, not the chorus of popular applause which may be aroused. Thoroughly to conquer that temptation is, I take it, one of the objects which every man should set before himself. And nothing, I think, helps one more than a vivid and enduring consciousness of the enormous debt which we owe to men and women who lived in obscurity, who never had a thought of emerging out of obscurity, and whose ennobling influence has yet become a part of every higher principle of action in ourselves. I may or I may not have formed too low an estimate of the services of the few heroes who stand conspicuously above the ordinary level; but I am certain that nothing that I can say would exaggerate the importance of many who have no claims to such a position. To cherish and preserve that influence by every faculty we possess seems to me to be our plainest duty; and we may comfort ourselves,

if comfort be needed, by the reflection that, though the memory may be transitory, the good done by a noble life and character may last far beyond any horizon which can be realised by our imaginations.

THE END.

April 3, 1896.

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